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# SHOW CASES

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BY

JACQUES  
LE CLERCQ

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## NOTE

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# THE CASE OF ARTEMYS LYNNE

*"Vice itself loses half its evil by losing all its grossness."*

*Burke.*

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THE NAME OF LOLA BUCHOLZ CONVEYS NOTHING to the general public. In California, a few people remember a girl so called, who lived in Fresno, attended the State University, and, on the death of her parents in the inevitable Californian automobile accident, vanished to Europe never to reappear. On the other hand, hundreds of people knew of Artemys Lynne in Paris, Madrid and Saint Xavier. Yet only a handful were aware that the two were one and the same person.

As Artemys Lynne, she suddenly appeared in the midst of the American colony in Paris. She was immediately taken up and made much of. Before long she possessed many firm friends, though all of them ignored her antecedents. She had a way of knowing and being known by people intimately rather than well. Antecedents did not seem to matter in her case; nobody cared. Artemys at times touched vaguely upon a childhood in Continental hotels; but more often she refused to reminisce. She was obviously of American origin, yet she assimilated the characteristics of the European so completely that the combination created a hitherto unknown and quite delightful type.

She was twenty-five or so in those days, with an income comfortable for the time and place: she owned a discreet and tasteful little house in the Rue Chalgrin, a handsome Fiat, and a little



villa above the Côte des Basques in Biarritz. Every two or three years she went to America and spent a small portion of the summer at a hotel in the Adirondacks, quite alone.

One would always see Artemys at the *répétitions générales* with interesting and amusing people. She was not in any sense a collector of personalities, as are so many American women who aspire to something like her position. It amounted rather to this: The better sort of person sought out this cool and charming bachelor-girl because her society was pleasant and distinguished, and because her intellectual powers were sharp and alert. She had a way of making naïve and profound epigrams that were perfect in their way. She hated inferior people; her intolerance must have terrorized them. In defence of a slandered lady, she said: "That type of woman is born to love both husband and lover; one would suppose before birth, her heart had been ordered to squint!"

Nor has Tristan Bernard disdained quoting her advice to old Plumeau, for the dramatist told Carpentier, who like Plumeau had essayed every means of reducing his weight:

*"Mon pauvre ami! il ne reste plus que de te faire juif!"*

Though she lived alone, save for a chaperon

one could scarcely entitle such, there was never, at least in the first years of her residence in Paris, any gossip about her. While obtaining her sure foothold in American circles, she was careful not to transgress. It was only when once she had arrived as far as she could in such a *milieu* and grown bored with the refined ardors and suave endurances of a transplanted New York existence, that anyone began to question any of her associates. Some of her dearer friends were fast friends, in both senses of the adjective; word began to travel about that she herself had been known to go rather a trifle too far. But no scandal assailed her; she was too clever. Yet women appeared little disposed to present their husbands to her. She mixed more with the true Parisian; one summer she went on one of Alfred Edwards' yachting parties, in the winters she was often seen with Emilienne d'Alençon and Cléo de Mérode. Much later she went to Spain, living in Madrid with the de Esparboejas (and what a tale the unknown facts would make!), ending finally in the capital of Saint Xavier as *maîtresse attitrée* of King Felix.

I met her once and saw her twice.

In 1909 when I was at school as a boarder in Auteuil, Reggie Barndale and I would often go out at night by climbing over the gate, running

down the Boulevard Suchet, and so, by belt-line railway, to Montmartre. We went most frequently by the last train, which made it quite late by the time we reached our usual haunt of "*Le Chien en Chasse*." Our pleasure there (in the beginning at least) was most innocent, consisting as it did of a bottle of Champagne and pretending a worldly enjoyment. I was very young and very shy, too shy, in effect, to beckon to the girls around me, and in their opinion, too young to prove profitable.

In one corner of the room sat Artemys Lynne with a middle-aged couple, obviously American, and a Guatemalan. There is something unique about Guatemalans, one cannot mistake them for any other people in the world. Her face was familiar (she was one of the most photographed women in Paris) yet I could not place her. She looked particularly well that night, in the plainest of black chiffon dresses, somewhat short and low-cut for the epoch, with a slight rope of pearls about her neck and two curiously-hung pearl earrings. I watched her dance with the South American; it was a pleasurable sight. Like most young men before a woman who excites them, I felt ill at ease, nervous, envious and wistful. I caught her eye once as the man whirled her about. To my surprise, she bowed her head to me and smiled.

I was too confused to answer the salutation at once. But as she passed my table, I noted she was still smiling, this time with a twinkle of amusement in her black eyes. I bowed, deeply.

The dance over, she and her companion came to me.

“How do you do? Don’t you remember me? At Mrs. Barndale’s?”

I tried to recall such a meeting, but though I had been to several of Mrs. Barndale’s large and promiscuous parties, I could not recall seeing the lady there. But I naturally rose to the occasion; I found myself enjoying the lie and my own power of dissimulation.

“Well, no more English: Senor de Sousa does not understand it!” She presented me to him as a schoolmate of Reggie’s. He nodded, suggested to her that I join them. I accepted with alacrity.

It proved to be, probably, the evening that I most enjoyed in my life. Incidents in practically the same key have occurred at various intervals during the course of my existence; I have discreetly committed indiscretions of the sort at one time or the other: everybody does. But this was quite unlike anything else in the world. A young boy, not yet sixteen; a woman of the world, picking him up out of the vast anonymity of Paris;

her gay, vivid interest in him; the Guatemalan's growing and ill-concealed jealousy; laughter; Champagne; music; the dance!

Here they were, taking me with utmost seriousness, these people, inviting me to vent my opinions on love, on woman, on France. Artemys smiled on me, drawing the most affected judgments from me and consecrating them with a flash of her white teeth, a little tug at my sleeve or a light touch of her foot under the table. When we danced, though her little sharp breasts pressed against me, she urged me to hold her more securely and drew my right hand downward until it grasped her very low at the waist, cupping her right hip. The Spaniard glared and called me "young man"; the American couple grew bored and I even believe they whispered something about cradle-snatching. But what was it to me? I, it was, who interested Artemys; the others, for the moment, meant nothing to her. Timidly, I spoke out of my grateful heart: how lovely I found her and gracious and full of spirit.

The night wore on. At last it was time to go. Artemys insisted on the Dollivers taking Senor de Sousa home; he lived near the Continental, she and I——

"Where *do* you live, Paul?"

*Artemys Lynne* ■

“Auteuil!”

“Capital!” said Artemys with a glance through half-closed lashes, “I live near the Bois. We will have a nice ride; it must be beautiful in the dawn.”

We parted. The Dollivers, stout and sleepy, waddled into their Cadillac. De Sousa, whose graciousness I had to admire, kissed Artemys’ hand, whispered something to her and actually gave me his card, asking me to come to lunch some day. Artemys stepped into a little Peugeot, I followed. A drive through the Bois, and back to the Boulevard Suchet via the Point-du-Jour was ordained. I settled back, comfortable against the nobly-cushioned car. Artemys drew a shutter across the front; the inside of it was a mirror. She fell back snugly into her corner and closed her eyes.

I watched her, drinking in the details of her charm, striving to fix indelibly the picture. Her jet-black hair, parted so surely by a long line down the middle of her head and gathered at the back; the dead-black fringe of her lashes, closed over the eyes like wet sloes; her incredibly white face and the carmine brilliance of her rouged, thin mouth, like a whisper made material and painted red. Her thin, short neck—what fools, I thought, men are to speak of women with swan’s necks!—her



firm, high breast moving ever so slightly with the intake and outlet of her breathing. Her pallor, revealing no uncertain though minute wrinkles at the corner of her mouth and near her temples, gave her an ever so faint suggestion of incipient ripeness. Her youth would last a year or two, yes, but its end was well in sight. She presented to my excited imagination something of beauty entering upon the long and hard road of corruption very evenly, almost unconscious of what the journey entailed. God! but young girls were dull!

Suddenly, she spoke:

"How old are you really, Paul?"

"Eighteen."

Had I done right, I wondered? Would she ask the Barndales, who knew I was not yet sixteen? Would she hold the lie against me? Or would she not, perhaps, appreciate the exquisite compliment I was paying her by wishing, be it ever so little, to be closer to herself? Another long silence. The trees of the Champs Elysées swirled by, absurdly green, of a piercing luminousness against the gray morning. Vegetable carts, wearing onions, carrots and greens in perfect trim as newly curled perruques, straggled down the avenue in vain haste to make their belated arrival at the Halles.



*Artemys Lynne* ▪

“*Es-tu vierge?*”

I gasped. Before I realised I had spoken, I heard myself protesting with vehemence:

“*Jamais de la vie!*”

She opened her eyes wide at this and glanced into the mirror scrutinising me. Doubt again assailed me. Had I been wrong to lie? Did she see through me?

I grasped her hand, slipped my arm about her shoulder, drew her against me, resting her head on my arm. But I did not kiss her or caress her. I suppose I really wanted to; I don't think it was shyness prevented me. As she lay in my arms there, she struck me as being infinitely younger than I, and she lay so still and calm, she might have been a dead child.

Then we were at the Boulevard Suchet, its drab contours looming before me. Disenchantment surged through me. I said good-bye, thanked her.

“No, it's I who must thank you. I've loved it. Do you know my name, you funny boy?”

I blushed.

“Artemys—Artemys—it's Diana,” I said.

“Artemys Lynne,” she told me, “you can find my address in the *Bottin Mondain* or in the Telephone Book. And, oh yes! Paul, don't tell the Barn-  
dales, please! This shall be our secret, eh?”

A pressure of the hand. I vowed fidelity, discretion. . . .

"I have seen you with Reggie . . . at the races . . . at Fouquet's. That's why I asked you to join us: I knew you were lonesome! You must come and see me. Very soon? Promise?"

I did, reaching for my hat and stick. I took her hand, was about to say good-bye again, when——

"Wait!" she ordered.

She placed her hands on my shoulders, moved forward towards me. I felt her, tremulous against me. She uttered a strange little sound, half-groan, half-sigh. I felt her tongue on my lips, swift, very soft and cold, cold as ice.

I went to see her. Once. Though, having given the servant my card, I heard laughter within, I was told she was out. After that, I never returned. Time passed. The interval increased my self-consciousness. Besides my timidity, there was something subtler urging me to stay away. It had been so wonderful and unique a night, its memory still stirred me so potently, that I was jealous of the disillusion that might possibly attend a further acquaintance. My imagination

*Artemys Lynne* ■

raised the episode to the remotely beautiful level of legend. It was enough.

I saw her once more, though I did not speak to her. In point of fact, I bowed and was snubbed for my pains with the blankest and most haughty look it was ever my fortune to receive. One of those impertinent glances women muster, when their supreme desire is to make a man feel like a worm and they thoroughly enjoy the process of vermification.

It was in 1914 at Biarritz. It was, of course, preposterous of me to imagine Artemys Lynne could remember me after such an interval, and yet, deep in my heart, I prayed she might.

Much water had flown under the bridges since then. She had removed to Madrid, lived with the Marquis and Marquise de Esparboejas, been received everywhere in Spain. Her engagement was frequently bruited about, but it never developed. When the Marquise died, the Marquis sued Artemys to recover the extraordinary legacy with which his wife had invested her. Artemys won her case with ease, settled in Biarritz, and, deciding to cast all convention aside, threw in her lot with Prince, later King, Felix.

In Biarritz she was often seen with the Princess who strove to make everyone realise she was much

attached to Artemys and smiled on her liaison with Felix. At Saint Xavier, that remote and picturesque Balkan town, Artemys lived in the very palace. In time, she became a quasi-public character. She was known to turn the weak king around her thumb. People pitied Queen Mathilda; it seemed unworthy that this regal lady should be obliged to associate so familiarly with the *Amerikanka* adventuress. They thought it generous of her to appear to like the latter so much. The radical press thundered against the incompetent, pleasure-loving king and his foreign mistress, sympathised with the unhappy but brave queen and threatened dire calamities in the future unless things changed. Then the war-clouds gathered and the troubles at Saint Xavier dropped from public notice.

When I saw Artemys in Biarritz, her intimacy with Felix was beginning to be generally known. She had already stayed twice in Saint Xavier. She was then the centre of a rich, brilliant and intellectually cynical crowd. Some of her best epigrams date from that period. "Virginity is merely a geographic expression." "Young girls and old men have in common a superabundance of lasciviousness: the former hoping to cheat life, the latter to revenge themselves for life having cheated

them," and "American women will always rule their men because they combine the simple sensuousness of the negro, the hypocrisy of the Puritan, the dogged avarice of the Jew and the romantic notions of a Bavarian *Hausfrau*."

Well, I chanced to be in the Casino at Biarritz. With me was Grover Bultitude, alleged to be a Secret Service man. Whether or not part of his duties was to make love to the wife of a Mid-western Senator, I do not know. He is, however, the only example of the *genus* I have ever encountered, and, in my mind, he is probably typical. The cinema has given us the idea that our international detectives are theatrical young men, combining the qualities of Rudolph Valentino, Richard Harding Davis and Sherlock Holmes, when, as a matter of fact, they likely resemble rather a composite picture of, let us say, William J. Burns, William Lyon Phelps and the Hon. Mr. Volstead. Certain it is that many an engaging story is told concerning the sleuth's attempt to extract information from the foreigner via the bottle, and, in one case, to my knowledge, his being quietly, politely and ignominiously put to bed by a British Naval Officer. But, of course, things may have changed; leastways, I know that my friend Bultitude, the only example I ever saw,

blurted out the one circumstance that makes this story what it is.

"Who is that woman?" I asked him as Artemys entered.

"Artemys Lynne—Prince Felix's latest—pretty, what?"

"Pretty? She's beautiful! Holy God, what a figure! And her eyes . . . stars. . . ."

"Yes," said Bultitude slowly, "*she is* lovely. And to think she's a California girl . . . Fresno, if you please! . . ."

"What?"

"Lola Bucholz is her real name!"

Then suddenly a change came over his face. He grew very red. He attacked another subject, and I, realising he had somehow blundered, suffered him to speak of other things. Twice he asked me—once late that night, and once a week after—if by any chance I happened to remember her real name. He claimed he had forgotten it, and added that anyhow it was all idle gossip. This fixed it the more firmly in my memory, though I protested I too did not recall it. I told him of my having known her very slightly in Paris, years before. Then she glanced in my direction.

I observed her carefully. She had coarsened somewhat: there was nothing left of a certain



simplicity<sup>d</sup> and wistfulness that had been hers; she had grown harder, with a new and reckless glitter in her eye, a nervousness of gesture, a sensuous carriage of body, and a quality of mastery, almost, one might say, of masculinity. Seeing that I examined her, she stared. I fancied perhaps she was delving deep in the mystery of past and half-forgotten things. Clearly I saw her sitting beside me in the Peugeot, driving through the Bois in the stark gray of early morning; I recalled the black dress; the amazingly fashioned pearl earrings; the weary, youthful pallor; the rise and fall of her high, firm breasts; I felt her hands on my shoulders, her breath against my cheek, and I trembled a little, as though, even now, I knew, upon my lips the swift, soft infrigidation of her troublous kiss.

I bowed. She raised a *lorgnette* to her eye, stared at me a long moment, asked her companion something which caused him to glance in my direction, then turned her back on me with a shrug of distaste.

I left the Casino immediately. Rage possessed me. It was an epic night of drunkenness. . . .

After the Armistice, indeed after the Peace and the subsequent downfall of King Felix and Mr. Artemys, as the papers of Saint Xavier called her,



I went to California. It was restlessness, desire for a change, a sublime ignorance of the *mores*, a picturesque notion that the State was something of an occidental outpost, and the hope of gathering information for a biography of Ambrose Bierce and even for a novel on Lola Bucholz that drove me out. I was disappointed all along the line, of course, save in regard to Artemys. Yet even in her case—well, there's no novel!

The question fascinated me. I thrilled at the thought of this strange girl, the daughter of country bumpkins emigrated from Iowa, pseudo-educated at the local mechanical college of Laputa, suddenly cutting completely loose from her past, disappearing for a few years to make a new entrance into the world, this time into its most civil and hallowed society, rising ever higher, always perfect mistress of herself, not to mention the sway she exercised over externalities, as a person to reckon with in the history of Europe.

Was there promise of eminence in her when, for example, she was at the High School in Fresno? Did anyone at the University imagine what heights she might scale? What happened in the intervening years, in the unknown interval after her parents' death had released her and before she fell from the skies, apparently, into 30 Rue Chalgrin?

After that, one can account for her life; but before—what happened before?

I searched continuously and diligently, and at last, one week before I left for Europe, I was rewarded. By tracing Lola Bucholz in old directories and catalogues, I was able to ascertain that there were among the Faculty eight professors who might have come into contact with her. One after another failed me. Then, finally, Dr. Garfinkle provided a clue. It was a farewell party in my honor; the kindly old sage was somewhat sentimental and reminiscent. We were walking homeward, and as we passed sites that stirred him, he described to me the ways of other days.

It was a mild night, one of those nights that happen only in California, when all things seem suspended until the hush would be intolerable, if it were not for the occasional, light rustle of leaves in the cool breeze. An uberous moon hung fatly in the cobalt sky, an orange udder-like moon in an incredible sky. The lanes about the University campus were filled with motor-cars, some bound for the aphrodisiac groves of Tunnel Road, others parked discreetly, biding their time. Now and then the rowdy urge or the subdued plangence of a negro jazz, played on a gramophone near-by, fell on our ears; at times, laughter sharper than

the cut of a whip or soft as a sigh of surrender broke in upon us. Then all was silence, unless the trees rustled for the moment, or the old Professor clear his throat and in his German mellow voice, stole color from the storehouse of the past to paint the lily of a perfect evening.

Never dreaming he would know, just as the others had failed to know, I none the less hazarded:

"Did you ever by any chance know a girl called Lola Bucholz?"

"What? What's that you say?"

"I wonder if by chance you knew a girl called Lola Bucholz . . . in about nineteen-one, I suppose. . . ."

He stopped in his tracks, turned towards me and was about to speak, but evidently thought better of it. Instead, he grasped my arm to steady himself and lighted his cigar once more. In the flame of the match, I saw he was agitated. A quick, nervous joy came on me: I could feel my temples, my wrists and my legs, just behind the knee, throbbing; I wondered that he did not hear my heart, it seemed to be pounding so noisily against my ribs. I grew light-headed, dizzy almost.

He asked: "Do you know her?"

"No."

"How did you know the name?"

"A friend of mine knew her. He was rather keen on her, I'm told!"

"Do you know what has become of her?"

I must not tell him, of course. The effect her name had made upon him augured favorably. She must seem quite impersonal or perhaps he would hesitate to speak fully. Something objective, totally estranged. Death, that was it!

"She's dead, you know."

Then, my Latin imagination rioting:

"She committed suicide . . . poison . . . New Year's Night at the Opera!"

(For a second I saw Artemys Lynne stretched on a sofa in a box, smiling in a picturesque and sculptural mortality . . . her eyes enigmatic and fixed . . . her long, tenuous fingers over her knees . . . her spirit, which was so wholly fleshly, triumphant in her flesh while death had stayed all motion of pulsation in her. . . .)

Garfinkle's torrent of talk swept away the imagination instantly. He was as though unaware of my presence. Even when he turned to me, addressing me by name, it was not to another he was speaking. It was his own heart calling to him over a bitter waste of days.

"My God! Lola Bucholz! Yes, yes, I knew her. It was the third time I came back here, after

I had finished my Ph.D. at Giessen. She was in my classes in literature. A very white girl with crow-black hair . . . yes, very quiet and aloof. For three years I taught her, yes, three years; there seemed nothing especially remarkable about her. She never made advances to her teachers to cajole them into favoring her, as many did. She appeared above all to strive for distinguished inconspicuousness. She was the only woman-student I ever had who struck me as being always—how shall I express it?—er—dead-right! Do you see what I mean? You never thought about her until you realised that you never had thought twice about her, and then—well, she did assume the quality of a riddle. She was so coolly sophisticated, so sure of herself and so utterly unemotional! Some of her themes and essays and stories were highly promising for just that stupendous lack of humanity in her! She was glass . . . or ice . . . or diamond, let us say. . . .

“And then, my dear friend, imagine it. Suddenly, one fine day—or night, it was night, at least one o’clock—she came up to my house—and—good Lord! how can I say it, Tanaquil, she——”

“Well?” I interjected.

He mopped his brow, then dealt the pavement a heavy swipe with his stick. It struck a spark.

He puffed on his cigar vigorously. A street-car hurtled by down the hill of Euclid Avenue. A cat, bent on a stealthy errand of the flesh, darted across the street and into a vacant lot. Crickets sang.

"My wife was in the hospital . . . baby, you know: John it was. Well, one night the bell rang at one. I rushed down in my pyjamas. It was Miss Bucholz. She walked in as though it were a habit of hers, sat down in the drawing-room and stared at me. She was in no wise troubled. I found myself going up, putting on my clothes and returning to her, simply under the spell of her will. But—do you know what she wanted?"

I made a ribald suggestion.

"My dear Tanaquil, the girl began by telling me her parents had been killed the day before in an accident. They seemed to matter to her as little as the cigarette in her hand. She was going to sell the house in Fresno, she said, collect all the money coming to her and leave for Europe."

"Strange!" I said, "but the excitement of at last being able to gratify a dream that she had scarcely dared formulate for years, perhaps, warranted her seeking you out, her former teacher. You know better than I how young people admire their teachers sometimes!"



"But she was unemotionality personified. No, this was no puppy feeling! She sat there blowing the smoke through her nostrils, telling me she planned to leave as soon as possible and—she asked me to join her! Suggested I clear out of here . . . leave my wife . . . the kid we were expecting . . . and just go off with her!"

"Whew!"

"Think of it, Tanaquil! We had never exchanged more than a hundred phrases. And here she bobs up at one o'clock in the morning . . . says she doesn't love me, but she doesn't mind living with me, supporting me, giving my wife an allowance . . . quite coolly . . . smoking her cigarette there . . . and I spluttering. . . ."

"You refused, eh?"

"Of course! And she just said quite evenly: 'I'm very sorry: you are making a great mistake!' and 'Good night!' and out she goes. I never saw her again in my life. So she committed suicide, eh?"

"Yes." Then I added out of curiosity, "Did you regret it?"

"Regret it? My dear fellow, no day went by for the next five years that I didn't eat my heart out with disappointment and self-reproach."



(Professor Garfinkle was the most thoroughly respectable man I ever knew.)

Scietoslav Ferdischenko, formerly Chancellor of King Felix, now Minister of the Republic at Washington, was with a party of us at the New Willard. Mrs. Jerry Hartzog was drawing out this latest addition to her menagerie. As a lion, Dr. Ferdischenko proved very disappointing to most people; he might have disappointed even Mrs. Hartzog if his taciturnity had not presented a golden opportunity for her to hold forth in her best manner. I alone was not disappointed, for I saw a fine contrast in Mrs. Hartzog's highly-colored expression of Sunday-supplement gossip and the deep, certainly pregnant silence of the knowing Slav.

With her habitual, and charming, tactlessness, she had turned the conversation towards Ferdischenko's late master (now in Switzerland with his royal spouse) and towards the disappearance, after the revolution, of Artemys Lynne. She questioned Dr. Ferdischenko.

"It's hard to tell," he answered, "she may be in hiding somewhere . . . in Austria or Germany or Hungary. Or again, she may have been done

away with. These things do happen in our country, just as in your Chicago!"

"What did she stand for?"

"What was best for us, I think. She had a great ascendancy over the King. She was bitterly opposed to the new Balkans: Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Serbia of to-day struck her as unjust and dangerous. But our liberal party was heavily subsidized by France. You can imagine, therefore . . . "

His voice trailed off into hushed discouragement.

"This amazing woman!" said Mrs. Hartzog, "an American woman gaining such power and influence . . . so spectacular . . ." (After all, it was better than even Mrs. Hartzog's envied position in Washington) " . . . and disappearing into thin air. . . . Romance! Dear Doctor, do tell them about the Balcony Scene!"

He hesitated. Evidently, he had been made to recite the incident countless times. He began in terse, well-chosen but obviously often-rehearsed phrases.

She interjected:

"It's nothing like a Romeo and Juliet scene, either!"

Ignoring the interruption, he pursued:

*Artemys Lynne* ■

“It was the third day of the Revolution. It was certain that the *régime* must fall. The machine guns had been dragged into the Royal Place, opposite the Palace at Saint Xavier. The mob outnumbered the soldiers by at least ten to one. There was a little rioting and desultory firing. Suddenly, masses came marching up from the Liberal meeting that had been held in the lower town. They sang the *Internationale*; one knew it was, in effect, the final struggle. The King, the Queen and Mrs. Lynne, as she called herself (her enemies called her Mr. Lynne because her power was so far-reaching and also because she possessed physically something dominant and unfeminine), were watching the place from the *salon d’hiver*. As the mob swung up the hill, they were calling Artemys Lynne’s name. It was an excited, half-drunken rabble, officered by Entente agents. We are a mad people, in some ways; through our radicalism, foreign powers can throw us into the most reactionary of policies. That, through Artemys Lynne’s offices, the people had obtained something approaching an eight-hour day, a reduced tariff and a measure of prosperity meant nothing; the propaganda against the control exercised by the royal government painted her as a Du Barry. The people, poor fools, believed it. And so they called

for her, swearing she would be sent away or it would go ill with Saint Xavier.

When the shouting was at its height, I reached the *salon d'hiver*. King Felix was maudlin; dead drunk; crazed with fright; utterly incapable. Artemys stood before the Queen with blazing eyes. I remember her saying with cold fury: "The damned swine!" The Queen was begging her not to do something or other but Artemys was adamant. "The damned swine!" Artemys kept on repeating, "The damned swine!" Then the Queen fell to her knees and grasped Artemys by the waist, pleading with her. But it was of no avail. She was very beautiful at that moment, with tears in her light eyes, a queen begging the other with all the terror in her heart. And the King, totally at a loss, walking up and down the room, ceasing the manœuvre only to raise his hands to his temples and whine. And Artemys Lynne, in a state of anger such as I have never seen equalled, storming away, oblivious of all but the outrage committed by the swine, the damned swine. . . .

"Well, she went out on the balcony and up-braided them:

"*'Salauds! Cochons! Cretins!'*

"A stray shot landed in the plaster above the French-window. The people in the court stood

quite still, trying to make out what she was saying. Perhaps to them the words brought Artemys' apology or a prayer for her safety. But they did not remain long under that impression. I can still see her plainly before my eyes, shaking her fist and crying:

“*‘Bande de salauds! Canaille! . . .’*

“Someone flung a stone at her and then several shots rang out. I was about to try to drag her in or to appear on the balcony to quell the crowd's growing anger, when the Queen came out on the balcony, threw her arms about Artemys, and, drawing her towards her, kissed her on the lips!

“The crowd was amazed. In their eyes, the nobility of the Queen, publicly embracing her husband's mistress and the enemy of her people, was completely baffling. It was my moment; I stepped out to address them, promising an inquiry into their grievances. The holocaust was staved off for a few days!”

“What a wonderful woman!” said Mrs. Hartzog. “What a heart! What nobility!”

Others in the group joined in. Somebody asked:

“What happened to Artemys?”

“Nobody knows,” Ferdischenko said, “she disappeared totally and without the faintest clue. It is one of those curious mysteries of history. Three

days later, His Majesty abdicated. The rest is known by everyone. . . .”

“Extraordinary creature!” Mrs. Hartzog was telling a Western senator, “beautiful Queen Mathilda on her knees before that *poule*, after all that is what she was: a *poule de haut luxe*!”

I was not satisfied, however. There was in Ferdischenko’s attitude something quietly ironic. I turned to him and whispered:

“I think there is something more subtle, *Herr Doktor*, than you pretend!”

“Perhaps. The story is, of course, intensely European.”

“What puzzles me is the unconcern of the King. For if he loved her, surely he would have interfered . . . ?”

“You have much perspicacity, Mr. Tanaquil,” said Dr. Ferdischenko with a gleam of amusement in his bovine eye, “I congratulate you.”

“He was a weak king,” I went on, “but, all things taken into account, I would consider him a very gallant gentleman.”

“Yes, yes! But——” He smiled a little maliciously, as though divining my answer and its truth, yet challenging me, “What, to you, is the keynote to the incident?”

“The scene on the balcony, undoubtedly,” I re-

plied, "it was the supreme dramatic moment of a highly poetic attachment. I think some national poet of Saint Xavier should indite, in its honor, an ode of pure Greek classicism . . . preferably, I should say, in Sapphics. . . ."

"One such could tell more than a novel," Dr. Ferdischenko commented.





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# THE CASE OF BEDRICH ZATLOUKAL

*"It takes a wise man to discover a wise man."*

*Xenophanes*

*"Female birds are excited or allured by the  
male with the most attractive voice."*

*Moll*

*"Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;  
The rest is all but leather or prunello."*

*Pope*

*" . . . Give me that man*

*That is not passion's slave and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts."*

*Shakespeare*

*"Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men."*

*Shakespeare*

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I FIRST MET HIM IN THE AMERICAN CONSULATE in Rome. He was having some difficulties in connection with his passport, and as he spoke no English, he appealed to me to translate certain Italian subtleties that were Greek to my compatriots in the office. Just as I was leaving, he passed his papers to me, asking me to look them over: he wished to be quite certain they were in order. From them I learned that his name was Bedrich Zatloukal, that he had been born in Bohemia forty-four years ago at Drahowitz, that he was first soprano in the Sistine Chapel and that he was about to tour North and South America with three fellow-choristers.

I assumed that everything was all right and we left the office together. He seemed elated that his troubles should be at an end; for a round, stout man, he walked almost jauntily, rising on his toes as he stepped forward, rather like a dancer. We chatted of various things: I had unfortunately to confess how scant was my knowledge of music in general and more especially sacred music; so he began explaining to me how Greek music came to be adapted by Saint Ambrose and later perfected by Pope Gregory the Great.

"Ah! the Ambrosian chant! I have sung it in Milano often, but so often!"

It would be impossible graphically to reproduce,

even in the phonetic script dearly beloved of the philologist, just what a curious sound his Italian made. One must know the language at its very purest and then hear a Czech—with all the barbarity of that hideous tongue!—attempt to use it; though he speak ever so accurately and fluently, though none of the nuances escape him; and then one must try to imagine the soft fluting voice of a child of twelve emanating from the rotund, sleek, full-moon face of a huge man shaped like a barrel, if one wishes to recreate for oneself something of the impression that Bedrich Zatloukal made upon me.

I was immensely interested. For one thing, I was learning about a fascinating subject that I had completely ignored, and I was being initiated into its historical and æsthetic details by a man whose whole life it was. I begged him to come with me to the café; we would drink a glass of wine or a cup of coffee and he would continue his explanation. Whether he was thirsty or gratified, I do not know; nevertheless he accompanied me.

As we sat down, I had more ample leisure to examine him. He was at least six feet tall and he must weigh something over two hundred pounds. His hair was very dark (which is not unusual with a Czech) and thin: he had a bald spot in the

back of his large head. His eyes were blue-gray and shining, but not so much with expression as with the smooth, unalterable sheen of flint. He had a heavy, massive jaw, but a mouth like a baby's: small, practically round, and the lips very red and prominent. Whilst he spoke, he would sometimes moisten his lips with the end of his tongue, making a little glub-glub sound, like coffee boiling in a percolator. His skin was very white and sleek; one could just discern a thin blue veil over the surface, testimony of his shaving. His shoulders were powerful, yet his hands were diminutive and groomed like a woman's, the nails left long and cut almost to a triangle. His feet, too, were extremely little, yet his thighs, legs and calves were big of bone and heavy with flesh. He wore black clothes; one noticed particularly his white stock and black patent-leather shoes encasing white socks.

"Ah, Ambrose!" he declared. "There was a man for you! One does not believe the *Schweinierei* about the bees, you know. But he was good and mild; he gave Theodosius something to think about. And he saved choral music for Europe. . . ."

I must confess I was somewhat startled by his views of the Church. Everything that had in-

fluenced the development of music, choral music in especial, was to him of the highest importance and praiseworthiness; and where he had to touch upon the character of a fine man, he paid a simple tribute; but anything short of either the ritual or mere kindness, he appeared to despise quite vehemently. His hearkening back to the Billingsgate of the Teutonic *plebs* of Drahowitz was comic, coming, as it did, from so gentle a man, intercalated in an Italian phrase and breathed in the same sentence as so many sacred names. He was impassioned as only a placid man can be at times.

"It's really Ambrose who wrote the *Te Deum*," insisted Bedrich, "they can say what they like about their Hilarys or Sissabuls: I know it was Ambrosius!"

At the third glass of wine, he asked me in my turn to accept a drink at his expense; and though I noticed he was flushed and particularly emphatic in all his statements, I was enjoying him too much not to wish to continue our conversation. He had almost finished his account of sacred music, being actually lyrical about Palestrina's *missa Papae Marcelli* and the *canto fermo*, so I was hoping for some rather more personal talk. I told him I had often been to Karlsbad, how I knew Drahowitz and the adjacent country.



"I was born in the third house in the Velka Ulice," he told me, "the fifth as you come into town. *Ma ora è un bordello!*"

His intention was, if all went well, to return to Austria—or rather Czechoslovakia, now—and to buy a little house in the country. Into the village church he would introduce all manner of musical reform, which would keep him sufficiently busy.

"Will you be in America soon?"

I told him, no: I expected to be in Europe at least three more years.

"Oh, I shall be back by then," he said, "and perhaps singing in France or Spain. I do hope that you will come to see me."

I hastened to assure him I would do so. He invited me to a rehearsal of Rossini's *Stabat Mater*—"not the splendid, old music yet good in its way"—but I was compelled to refuse. By then I would be on my way to London.

He rose, waved his hand, turned on his heel. From the door, just as he moved off, he saluted me once more with a swift vibratiuncle of his left hand. As he passed by the open window, I heard him humming softly to himself a distinctly secular if not outright ribald Neapolitan song.

Suddenly I remembered palpably as though I had just read it, a passage out of a book I had

studied years ago with a tutor from the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. It spoke of men who "*mit weiblicher Weicheit und männlicher Kraft*," says Hyrtl, "*zur Ehre Gottes singen*."

The next time I saw Bedrich Zatloukal was two years later. I happened at the moment to be at Poitiers, collecting data on Rabelais' sojourn at the University there. Most of my work had to be done among the archives of the monasteries and religious establishments, of which there are over forty in and about the town. I thus grew to be quite friendly with the brothers. At that of Saint-René-des-Ilots-Fortunés, where lay the greater part of my research, I used often to dine and chat with them. One day, one of their number announced that the choristers of the Sistine Chapel were shortly to give a concert in the town.

I asked after my friend; no one knew exactly how many singers were coming: no arrangements had been made save the appointing of a date.

"Zatloukal?"

The organist scratched his head, trying to recall some distant memory.

"I don't think I remember. . . ."

I strove to assist him:

"Tall . . . fat . . . sleek . . . a Czech . . . a magnificent soprano!"

Yes, he seemed to remember very vaguely. He had come to the Eternal City the year the Frenchman left; his voice at the time had been hailed as capable of becoming unique among sopranos.

"And he has succeeded, eh?"

I told him what I knew of Zatloukal: how he had sung his way around the globe and how he was hoping eventually to retire.

"*Pourquoi faire?*" asked the organist.

I explained about the country-house Zatloukal cherished in his dreams. The Frenchman shook his head ruminating:

"*Non,*" he delivered himself of his meditation, "*C'est tout de même drôle, ces gens-là!*"

But it was a month or more before I actually saw the man who "all the same" was "comic." And I came very near to missing him altogether.

The Cirque Darius Vollandin, the largest in the world, as its posters proclaimed it, was to play in the Place d'Armes. I decided to go to see its first night, dull as it would necessarily be, for I must have some sort of mild distraction. If the concern of Darius Vollandin failed to offer it, at least I should be vouchsafed a glimpse of *mœurs provinciales*, and who could tell but that I might see

many Daumiers in the life? I passed down the Rue Carnot on my way to the town square.

There was quite a crowd gathered around the theatre; I threaded my way through with difficulty. On the corner I met Captain Desgouttes, who told me he was off to hear the Sistine Choir. They were to sing, to-night, at eight o'clock, in a quarter of an hour, to be precise, and not twenty yards from the horrible circus. Wouldn't I come? Of course: well, then——

The posters bore Bedrich Zatloukal's name in large type; he was to appear with Signor Tommaso Giandomenici, Signor Enrico Spadella and Signor Arturo della Mallette, in a program of sacred and secular music.

I gave my card to an usher, scrawling a few words about our brief acquaintance in Rome and asking for his company at supper. As I entered the theatre, the curtain rose.

Since my meeting with Zatloukal in Rome, I had become interested in church ritual and music. While in Paris I had not failed to visit the Schola Cantorum and I had followed the career of my new hobby with eagerness. So that, beautiful indeed as was the rendering of the part of Stradella's oratorio *San Giovanni Battista*, and the *Pange*,

*lingua, gloriosi* of St. Thomas Aquinas, it did not begin to please me so much as the secular portion of the program. Certainly not so much as the last song of the evening.

In Zatloukal, I had naturally expected to find a voice frankly superb. He was acknowledged to possess a soprano as remarkable as had ever sung in Rome, and he had proved most valuable in drawing crowds to the theatre and dollars to the Papal exchequer. Hearing him, one forgot the bulk and flesh of the man; the fat face and the little hands folded over his pendulous belly (it was one of his mannerisms to stand so) vanished from one's sight as one followed the clear, sweet sound of his voice through unknown distances of unutterable dreams.

One forgot, too, the ludicrous spectacle afforded by the contrasting appearance of the Signori Zatloukal and Giandomenici. The alto was a tiny man, little more than four feet eight in height, with an egg-shaped head devoid of the faintest suspicion of hair. As he stood beside the other, the approximation was like nothing so much as Mutt-and-Jeff—but the Mutt-and-Jeff of a polite and subtle civilisation. Yet when they sang, nothing remained save the purity of their harmonious accord; that, and that alone, mattered.

My friend was in no wise altered, even to the patent leather shoes and the white socks. His bow was indeed a pantomime of the words he had spoken to me two years before:

"I, Zatloukal, am nothing. Blessed be Saint Ambrose, for verily he saved church music!"

Zatloukal seemed to pay no attention to the applause, he merely came on with the others, bowed, sang, bowed and left the stage. His features were mobile only in so much as singing demanded it; otherwise, the expression of his face was blank. But his voice! What a reach! What a crystalline clearness! With what a magnificence it endowed that which he sang! It seemed so sheerly lyric, so spontaneous for him to be singing thus, and yet he was a man! The contradiction of it, and the triumph of his art over the contradiction! Here was pure, unadulterated beauty of sound in its essence.

During the intermission, the usher returned with a note for me. Of course Zatloukal remembered his friend with pleasure, he would be delighted to see him after the concert but alas! only for a short time. He must beg his indulgence; a previous engagement prevented his presence at supper. My friend Captain Desgouttes was most interested in Zatloukal and very keen to meet him. He was

an entertaining fellow, a dilettante and a man of considerable native humor. He never suffered anything to interfere with it, either; a thing which I prized highly in him. He could sit through a concert in indisputable rapt admiration; yet afterward, at the café, he never failed to joke about the ankles or petticoat of the lady violinist or the absurd whiskers of the pianist.

The secular part of the program was interesting in effect; but the last number was a *chef d'œuvre*. It purported to be a modern Greek folk-song, very popular with the gipsies. The mere mention of it on the printed page arrested my attention; but I was never prepared for anything like my reaction to the song when it came to be performed.

Zatloukal folded his arms and rocked gently as he sang. He gazed straight ahead into space, uttering the melody *pianissimo*, faint as a sigh, slender and fugitive as the light flight of a swallow.

It was a weird, wailing sort of a piece, that passed from minor into minor; to my mind it suggested the phrase "the wailing of the daughters of Jerusalem," connoting in its full significance the hopelessness of human grief. It swelled, then, and grew, as the others took it up, into a sound of anguish unbelievable; it was symbolic of all pain



to be imagined; it was shot through with desolation. From time to time, came a hush, while basso and tenor reiterated the motif of the song. Then the entire scheme of the composition was once more taken up, passing almost imperceptibly to a lull of uncertainty, trembling, as it were, upon the edge of a possible hope of release. Gradually a sense of sureness crept into it, becoming more definite; now was the triumph of recovery and consequent peace, cool and serene as the shadowy rest afforded under giant trees. Finally, at the precise instant the poem appeared to be ending on this still, untroubled harmony, just as I was getting ready to clap, Zatloukal burst into a cry of exultation, a tremendous shout of beatification. I have never heard such a note in my life; he struck the high C. It was a revelation.

A second or two later, tearing myself out of my mood, I was aware of him bowing perfunctorily and vicariously for Ambrose.

I was particularly glad they sang no encore, it must necessarily have blotted out the impression remaining from the moment out of which I had of a sudden been so rudely shaken. Indeed, when I saw Zatloukal in the lobby of the theatre, some time later, I was annoyed—and more annoyed be-

cause I did not know what it was vexing me. I felt, I suppose, that I could never express to him the thoughts and feelings that had surged within me; they were too urgently potent and too recent for me, even, to analyse them myself. And what else, after all, was this Zatloukal except a fat Czech with little hands and feet, with absurd white cotton socks encased in tiny patent-leather shoes, with a maxillary strong as an ox's, and a mouth red and drooping forward like a baby's? What else than perforce an extraordinary man—*vide* Hyrtl—a man who, when he did not happen to be singing, might as well be part of the world famous circus of Darius Vollandin out on the square there.

“My friend! My friend!”

He was welcoming me boisterously, delighted to see me. He would have loved to have had supper with me—“oh! loved it so much, but so much!”—only he had another engagement.

“Well, you must at least come to the café for a drink!”

“Certainly, my dear fellow, of course. My engagement is not till . . . much later!”

Desgouttes winked and Zatloukal saw him.

“Ha, you military! Always you think of *aventures galantes*!”

We adjourned to the Café de la Comédie. Over

a *grog américain*, Zatloukal narrated his experiences in the three Americas, and, more recently, in the Balkans. They had been in these parts on a concert tour last year; it was in Athens that Zatloukal had come by the Greek piece they had performed that evening. I continued to speak about music with him, until I noticed my French friend was preoccupied and silent. This with him was always a bad sign. I feared he might be meditating some embarrassing situation, for he was examining Zatloukal very critically. The soprano broke the pause:

"It is so lucky to meet you again!" he said, addressing me solely. "I cannot express to you how happy I am! Ah, these meetings! Listen; I will tell you of a strange *rencontre*!"

Desgouttes leaned forward. I gave Zatloukal my attention.

"I told you of an engagement, *hein?*"

"Yes."

"Well, I have met, here in Poitiers, a person whom I had not seen since I left my country. I knew her in Drahowitz, years ago; we were children together. Her name is Andulka Slama!"

Captain Desgouttes asked what she happened to be doing in Poitiers. The soprano smiled shyly:

"She is in the circus!"

We looked at him and he continued:

"As a girl, Andulka was very daring. She could do anything on a horse, and she climbed trees we boys were afraid of trying. In a tree she was a squirrel; in the water, a fish!"

He smiled broadly at the memory.

"Well, to-day, before the concert she appeared in my *loge*, told me her name and——" his voice rose to a squeak in his excitement, he licked his lips as he spoke, "we are to meet to-night, after the circus is finished!"

Captain Desgouttes spoke of a romance, circus-rider and soprano.

"*Ma no, ma no!* we are as brother and sister! I remember the first time I really cried, it was Andulka consoled me. Ah, you military! Always, scandal!"

We chatted on for a while, Zatloukal and I reminiscing about Rome and the circumstance of our meeting; I told him, too, how I had become interested in church music.

Suddenly Desgouttes emerged from his silence:

"Monsieur, a question that I hope not indiscreet . . . but—is it that your throat is shaped absolutely like that of no matter whom?"

The soprano nodded; Captain Desgouttes pondered a moment, then:

"But—how shall I say it?—is it that you are . . . I mean, are you as other people in the respect . . . "

He searched vainly for the right words. Zatloukal glanced at the clock and rose.

"I must go now; it is late!"

He shook us by the hand, bid us good-bye, and, turning to me:

"You, *mio caro*, when shall I see you again?"

I smiled:

"Perhaps in Drahowitz!"

He moved to the door; once there, a swift bow, a vibratiuncle of the left hand.

"*Ah ça, mon cher*," Desgouttes said, when he was gone, "*ah ça! crois-tu que ces types-là sont comme nous ou que dans leur jeunesse, on . . . ?*"

I shrugged my shoulders.

When, in Poitiers, I had jestingly told Zatloukal that perhaps—who knows?—our next meeting might be in Drahowitz, I little guessed that such indeed was the event Fate held in store for us. The prophecy did not come true literally in every detail. It was in Karlsbad, to be exact, that we saw each other, some twenty months after I had said farewell to him at the Café de la Comédie in the gray Cathedral town.

Late in summer, I went to Karlsbad, less to take the cure than simply to rest. I was staying up at the Imperial, on the hill; and about all we did that year was to play tennis and dance in the evening. Though a delightfully lazy life, it began, in the long run, to pall somewhat. The over-pompous dance hours, twice a week in the ball-room, got on one's nerves; the Grill was tolerable now and again but tedious as a steady diet. We tried several places in the town: the Goldene Schild, Zum Elefant and Petter's. Each furnished its quota of amusement—for a short spell. But during the last week of my stay, I must say we had a hard time of it finding something to do in the evening. After all, the only use for bridge is as an opiate after dissipation.

One afternoon in the bar, Arthur Rummage announced that he had discovered a new place; it was called the Metropole and was in Fischern, adjoining the Fair Grounds. Did we care to go?

"I don't suppose it's frightfully exciting," he told us, "in fact, I heard it was a dump!"

"Thank God!" I said, "for a place that is not trying to imitate the *boîte* of Montmartre. . . ."

"Or the Munich imitation of the *boîte*!" Rummage added.

Anyhow, the Fair was going on, and if we were

bored at the Metropole, we could try that. So we decided to go that night.

The Metropole, I must confess, was pretty bad. We stayed there only long enough to down some Champagne, manufactured from Brittany apples. Then we made for the Fair.

It was the annual town-fair which takes place two weeks every year. It is situated on the left bank of the Eger, just under the bridge uniting the suburb of Fischern with Karlsbad proper. There are merry-go-rounds, booths of every description, a beer-garden, a rickety scenic-railway, a great many stands and in the midst of it all, the Deutsch-böhmische Zirkusgesellschaft. Reading the huge placard outside the tent, I noted that it termed itself the finest circus in old Austria; I remembered the Poitiers circus with its flaming legend and I compared the two. These Austrians were truly a moderate and modest people, I reflected.

We entered, just as the clowns had finished an act. They were followed by a tall, thin Bavarian—announced as Miss Bettsy from Manchester. Next came a comic juggler; his bravest feat in my eyes was the amazing things he did with his Adam's apple while throwing and catching hoop and ball. The clowns followed once more, then Andulka Slama, Queen of the Air. She disported herself



on a tight-rope for twenty minutes, risking, by my count, her own life eleven times and mine (I sat right under her) four. Having, at the end of her exhibition, been presented with a bouquet by a fat sleek man in evening clothes, she submitted to the kissing of her hand by the adipose gentleman, who displayed an admirable gallantry.

The last act—Innominato: Cantor Italiano—appeared. He wore a red-velvet Tuxedo, fringed with gold, and a black straw-hat, which he placed so far back upon his head that its rim appeared as a halo, in the manner of Broadway theatricians. I looked at him across the haze of tobacco-smoke and dust. He opened his mouth, began to sing. . . .

**ZATLOUKAL!**

“Of course, my dear fellow, I am happier in my life than ever I was before,” he told me in the artists’ tent. “I am Director-General of the Circus, I earn money and keep what I have earned, and I am married. . . .”

“Married?” I gasped.

“ . . . to the most charming of ladies. I have bought back my old home in Drahowitz which continues as before save that I own it. Andulka and I travel in the summer and rest in the winter. I keep up my singing. . . .”

“But how did you ever do it?” I begged him.  
“And when——”

He laughed at my amazement. He had never really liked the old profession, it was the music he enjoyed. Well, he could still enjoy it. And Andulka would not hear of leaving the life she loved. So—what else was there to do? At all events, he was radiantly happy.

“She is so good to me, we are so happy! We love each other as much as the first day. Our son——”

“You have a son?”

“My wife’s—he’s grown-up—but I adopted him. I, of course, have no children. The fellow is doing very well at Heidelberg. We stay with him in winter.”

Gradually the story came out. The circus of Darius Vollandin had been at Lyon and at Marseille at the same time as the Papal Choir; Zatloukal had seen Andulka frequently; finally, he had realised that she was the most congenial person in the world.

“The happiest marriages are as ours—platonic, my boy! Sometimes, naturally, Andulka has moments of ardor in which I cannot share, but what does that matter, after all? *Satrazeni!* She and I eliminate the one feature that spoils most mar-

*Bedrich Zatloukal* ■

riages! Ah! but you should see us! We are so happy . . . so happy. . . .”

From the way he spoke, I knew it was true. I could not help reflecting how strange it was that genuine felicity should rise from so unnatural a relation; vaguely, I wondered what Desgouttes would have thought of the business.

*Ah! celui-là . . . !*



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# THE CASE OF HELEN WHITE

*"All love is sweet  
Given or returned. . . .  
They who inspire it most are fortunate  
. . . but those who feel it most  
Are happier still."*

*Shelley*

*"Alas! the love of women! it is known  
To be a lovely and a fearful thing."*

*Byron*

*"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can  
the floods drown it."*

*Solomon*

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IT WAS MY LAST NIGHT IN ENGLAND. Hospital in London, convalescence in Devon and a week's leave were now but a memory. In forty-eight hours, I would be back in France again.

I was glad of one thing: that I would see my kinsman, Jasper Tanaquil, before going. As I bicycled along the Tipsham road, I mused on the days when I was a schoolboy here and when I went to stay at Jasper's. I wondered whether I would find him much changed and what had become of Helen White, his ward? His letter to me had been most cordial: knowing I was so near, he had begged me to come and spend the night. I anticipated his welcome with pleasure.

It was late dusk. The English countryside was swathed in crepuscular shadows and the horizon was of a deep mauve. White houses flashed by here and there, and white fences; the air grew fresher now as I reached the sea, and a moon rose very low in the east, a pallid framework for a richer and more tingent one to fill. A few stars seemed timorously to prick the blue envelope of sky; trees marked fantastic outlines against the uncertain background of changing light, and the white milestones tapered on along the road into the delitescence of the horizon. There was the coolness of leaves. At last the sea came in sight, and the harbor with its white cliffs; I could make



out the ships quite distinctly, with gulls wheeling and veering about their masts in charming curves.

My last night in England! It was good that it should have been such a limpid, clear night and that the air should have been fresh with the salt tang of the sea. It was good, too, that I should be on my way to the first house I had ever stayed in in England, with the first Englishman I had ever learned to love. Were I never to see England again, I was thankful, at least, that this should be the last glance vouchsafed me of it.

Deliberately I conjured up memories of the old days at Tipsham, of Jasper Tanaquil, my kinsman, and of Helen White, his ward. I recalled Jasper walking through the forest in Karlsbad with me when I was eight: I could almost see his tall figure before me and his ironic gay smile that began out of the corners of his eyes and ended in the twist at the corners of his lips. I remembered how he looked when he came down to school and unfailingly gave me a tip of a sovereign. And another occasion came to me, when on my way home for the holidays he met me on one train and put me on another, but in the interval he had taken me to his club for luncheon and he was evermore a God.

Of Helen, my impressions were blurred. She was two years older than I, which would make her

twenty-five now. As a child, so far as I could recollect, I had disliked her intensely. Nothing I ever did met with her favor: she used to rebuke me for the English I spoke, for my table-manners and for my untidiness. She would try to make a lie out of everything I said. She found the most ingenious ways of baiting me. Then she would repent, and she would ask my pardon. I called to mind a gesture of hers when she would take my hand between hers, flattening her moist palms against it. I found this even more unpleasant than her open hostility, yet I dared not draw away. She would look at me silently, then, while I squirmed, and, pushing me away, call me a great booby. In those days, she had a white, drawn face, with nothing childish about it. There were dark circles under her eyes and I thought that for a girl of her age her breast seemed too full. In my hatred, I used to say she was a fat woman masquerading as a girl.

Two incidents returned to me. One evening, as we were going to bed, she stopped me in the passage and kissed my cheek, leaving a trace of saliva. I called her a soppy kid and suddenly, without warning, she scratched my face so hard as to draw blood. The other incident was more hazy in detail: my point of view has doubtless

changed it not a little. But, perspective or no, it was of a sort one cannot forget. For many things escape one: names and circumstances in childhood, at home or at school—people one loved, even women—and soldiers who fought by one's side. Yet the revelation, sordid or beautiful, trivial or sacred, grotesque or angelic, of the uses of the flesh, remains indelible. In point of fact, I owe this revelation to Helen and the gardener's boy whom I accidentally surprised. At the time I was immensely disgusted: shame possessed me as though I were the person at fault, there were tears in my eyes and I felt ill. To-day, of course, the event seemed merely droll. . . .

I opened the gate, propped my bicycle against the wall and walked down the familiar path to the house. I could see the meadow, where I had played more than ten years ago, and the spire of the village church. Ten years! The house hadn't changed much from the outside. I supposed the greyhounds were dead, though.

Helen must have been watching for me, because I had barely let the knocker fall back when the door swung open and she stood before me. A lamp burned dimly—these were days of frugality—in the hall. She stood before me motionless, her

hand extended. At the time it struck me that she had been standing there, motionless, expecting this moment.

“Paul, how nice of you to come!”

I caught a glimpse of her hair, copper-bright and dressed with a beautiful simplicity, parted in the middle and gathered over the nape of her neck; of her eyes, green, greener than I had remembered them being; and of her emaciated, long hand. I held it a second; it was icy cold. Then I found myself bending down to kiss it, mechanically. At once the shell of her body seemed for an instant to become living flesh. She trembled convulsively. But immediately after, she was a skeleton, immobile.

“How nice to be at Tipsham again!”

“Jasper will be delighted to see you,” she said. “He’s in the library, waiting for you. Here, let me help you with your coat!”

I put my kit on a chair, took off my coat and turned to her.

“How funny! Fancy seeing you like this, Paul, an American Tommy!”

She stood quite still, looking at me steadily. There was something extraordinarily fixed and penetrating in her glance, though her eyes seemed without lustre. She reached out towards me

and took my hand between hers. I felt the pressure of her cold, open palms. I recalled that gesture of hers as a girl and I smiled. Then she appeared to be looking at me, yet, immediately after, beyond me. She was like a person imprisoned whose glance travels swifter and further. Was there a fear in her eyes? When she looked down on me, her eyes were moist. They were a favor and a caress. She said:

“Jasper’s changed somewhat. You see, he’s quite a bit older. . . .”

“Yes. But Time has been very kind to you, Helen. When I remember the girl I knew here . . . .”

I observed her. She wore a plain black satin dress, rather long and fitting very close about her body. It accentuated her gaunt shoulders, her sinewy neck; but her bare arms, exquisitely fashioned and rich in color and texture were a masterpiece, imploring the brush of a painter. It also accentuated the low slope of her breasts, her angularity of hips and the long line of her thighs.

“I’m Jasper’s wife,” Helen said blandly. I sensed there was an effort in her casual tone. I was too surprised to say anything that might help. She went on: “We were married two months ago, when I came back from France.”

"I think it's splendid! After all, who could be a better husband than your guardian? I do wish you all the happiness . . ."

Her thin lips came together in a pout:

"Yes, yes, we're very happy!"

"Why didn't I know about it, I wonder?"

"I don't know. You only wrote once. It was all rather sudden and extremely quiet."

"When were you in France, Helen?"

"I've been twice. With the V. A. D." And again she said: "Jasper and I were married when I came back from France."

She gave me a cold, hard look as though challenging me to object; she let my hand fall, just as she might a stone she had picked up and toyed with. She turned away from me.

"Let's join Jasper; he's in the library. We'll have dinner in a few moments."

My kinsman rose to greet me. I was shocked at his white hair, at the dullness of his glance, at the stoop of his shoulders, and, as he made a few steps towards me, at his walk—his walk which was not a walk. What could have happened to him? Where was his gaiety? This was not Jasper, but a ghastly caricature of the man I had loved. What had they done to his eyes?

We sat down and chatted about family affairs.



All the time a *gêne* hovered over us. I could tell that Jasper was little interested in what I said; even his questions about my father, his friend, were perfunctory. Helen remained practically silent, until suddenly she went out to mix a cocktail.

I could not think of any reason for my embarrassment, but it was a thing unmistakably to sense. I thought Jasper was trying pathetically hard to be his idea of what I considered him in the old days; I was trying equally hard to ignore this. Both of us failed dismally. After what seemed an hour, we went in to dinner. I suddenly realised that I had not been shown my room and that nothing had been said about my spending the night at Tipsham. Yet in his note Jasper had invited me. What was the matter?

"No house-servants now," Jasper remarked gloomily, "The War . . ."

"We can only give you a cold dinner, Paul," Helen put in. "I hope you won't mind. There's some Burgundy . . ."

"And very good Burgundy, too . . ."

"We had to let all the *men* go," Helen lamented. "The gardener, the coachman, Royce, Taylor, the grooms! Poor Paul, it's a different house, isn't it?"



"Oh no," I said idiotically. "And things will right themselves." I mistrusted my voice. There was a silence. Anything rather than that, I thought. I added: "I do think it's corking, you two being married. I must congratulate you, Jasper."

As I spoke, somehow I felt like a man making a jest over a grave. It was like telling a man the next one was for him and suddenly seeing him collapse at one's feet. Jasper said: "Thanks!" and offered me some ham. Helen looked quickly up at me, then down at her plate and said something about France. The V. A. D.'s came up in the conversation; Jasper denied the utility of most of the women in France. I championed them violently:

"Jasper, that's not true. Who can ever explain the amazing, almost mystical triumph of the flesh in these days?"

"How do you mean?" he asked testily.

"I don't quite know, but I can feel it. A soldier rises or sings to being a man, no more, no less. But woman is the cause, the goal and the deliverance—especially the deliverance—of everything in the world."

"Hark at him!" Jasper mocked. "The boy's a poet like his father."

But Helen was looking at me, bright-eyed and breathing quickly. I said:

"If anything has broken down, it's God. He may be a hollow word, a peg to hang an oath on: but Woman is the image of the Madonna and of the trollop that every male enshrines in his heart."

Jasper coughed nervously and eyed Helen. I was wound up; I continued speaking, for this was an idea that had often occurred to me, that I hoped some day to write about.

"You may think me a sentimental ass, Jasper. Anyhow, you're an Englishman and I'm not. To me, there's the smell of steel or iron or brass, the stench of gas or the smoke of fire, there's sweat and rot and death—but over and above it all, there's a subtler, deadlier *odor di femina*, of rose and mandrake and valerian holding the splendor and disgust of desire locked within us. I remember when I lay on the station-platform, waiting to be put on the hospital-ship. There was a little V. A. D. a few yards away. God knows who or what she was; I knew I would never see her again. But she smiled at me, and it was a cascade of flowers falling on my heart. . . ."

A tiny fire flickered in the room. The ghost of a man I loved sat on one side of me, frowning and silent; a pallid woman, with bright fierce eyes

and thin twisted lips, said something in a dead voice across the sinister half-light of a single candle. There was a silence, after; and again I was aware of being an intruder. Jasper, a note of pain in his voice, said wearily:

“It’s all very pretty and poetic as an impression. But facts . . . ”

Helen adroitly steered the conversation into other channels. I noticed her face was flushed and wondered whether the Burgundy were responsible. Her eyes were all the brighter for it. We all must have felt that while they questioned and I answered, possibly less cursorily than they, none of us really cared a twopenny damn what was being said. But conversation must somehow be kept up; so it went on and on, under the most distressing circumstances. I remarked that whenever Helen looked at me, Jasper would look nervously at her. While I addressed him, I saw he still kept an eye on her. I was puzzled at his nervous, protective glances; her eye I met but rarely. And always over us brooded that horrible, incomprehensible embarrassment.

Helen finally left the table, Jasper and I remaining over our port. She passed him, making to go out to the hall. But, when she was directly behind his back, she paused on the threshold. I

happened to be following her with my eyes, while Jasper related an anecdote of the War Office.

Helen turned, facing me. Her lithe, long arms rose high above her head; she clasped her hands, and, drawing a deep breath, turned the palms outward, letting her head fall backwards, so that I could not see her face. I could detect the play of every muscle in her body as she bent back. Her breast swelled; I followed the motion of her flesh, under her thin dress, as clearly as though she were naked. The movement extended to her stomach, and flowed, like a wave, over her hip and thigh, as she swayed outwards and curved again inwards, like a dancer on a stage. It was all so sudden and silent, so particularly private and so obviously the age-old gesture of a woman offering uncontrollably the wealth of her body to a man, that I gasped. I trembled, too, because I am a fool. And when I looked up again, she was gone.

Another half-hour passed in desultory talk. I caught Jasper looking at the clock twice; still, nothing had been said about my staying at Tipsham. There were several rather painful silences. Then I said:

"It's getting rather late, Jasper. If I'm to ride back to Casual Camp, I ought to be starting . . ."

He nodded. I noted how nervous he was and as though ashamed. He said:

"At least you've time for another glass of port, eh?"

Again, a pause. Then, pouring the wine to hide his discomfort, my kinsman murmured:

"It's rather hard . . . can't explain, my boy . . . but do think the best of us, eh? . . . old times' sake? . . . I had meant to ask you to spend the night . . . frightfully sorry . . . impossible . . . at the last moment . . . you understand, eh? . . ."

I hastened to assure him it was all right. He brightened visibly; the relief was welcome. He assured me I was a very tactful fellow. We rose from the table. In the hall, Helen stood waiting for us. When she looked up as I came forward, I had an impression that she was beckoning me, trying to reach out to me. It is always difficult to describe such a sensation, yet it was, to me, a vivid one. Jasper walked to her side and put his hand on her wrist. I made my adieux.

"But Paul's not leaving, is he? I thought he was going to spend the night here, Jasper."

"I'm frightfully sorry," I said. "But I've only leave till midnight."

"It's a pity: he's got to get back."

Helen suggested she walk down to the village with me, but Jasper said no so decisively that she started. Again I said farewell; Helen insisted on walking to the gate with me.

“You had better not, my dear, it’s cold.”

“I’m frightfully hot. It won’t hurt me.”

Jasper made no reply. I opened the door, Helen passed through it swiftly. As we walked down the path, she said:

“You must just shake hands with me at the gate, quite casually.”

I did not answer.

“Do you understand?”

She was plainly nervous. Her voice shook. I said yes, I understood. We continued walking down the path in step, like a pair of trained horses.

“Jasper is watching us, you see. I can’t explain. But I shall see you again, Paul.”

There was a vehemence in her tones that struck me as extraordinary for such a matter-of-fact statement. We reached the gate: I shook her hand with studied carelessness. Helen seemed to sway towards me; I was about to put out my arms to catch her when she regained her poise. She cleared her throat; her voice was husky with passion, and cruel, as with a threat:

“I shall see you again, Paul!” she repeated.

We met again. It was quite by chance, and in Paris, a post-armistice Paris in which people were just beginning to breathe again, where they felt life was their birthright and no mortgaged security, where at last one could be gay, without a thought of others. While, during the war, women had been half-sensual, half-maternal, now they declared a moratorium of any responsibility whatever. There were no duties, as before, towards man; there were simply favors towards a particular man, some or any man, for five minutes, for an hour or for a year. Now was the hour of Helen's triumph.

It appeared that she had been in Paris for more than six months, while Jasper remained alone at Tipsham. I did not know this. It was only three days before I was to leave for America that I heard from him. I left a note at Helen's hotel, telling her that Jasper had bid me call. But I did not tell her that his letter seemed to me to echo apprehension and anxiety on her account. At last, the very night before I was to sail, while I was finishing my packing, after eleven o'clock, I was told that Madame Tanaquil was downstairs waiting for me.

Helen was in evening clothes, in black, which suited her so well. A single string of pearls was



round her neck; she carried a large fan, with which she tapped my shoulder in greeting. If she had appeared thin at Tipsham, three years before, now she was even more so: one could see the framework of her bones; her cheekbones, for instance, were particularly salient. There were deep circles under her eyes that no cosmetic could palliate. Weariness gave her an aggressive, hungry look; her eyes, as they flashed up at me and dwelled on my face, I can describe only as greedy.

"I've a car outside, Paul. Come along, we'll go on a spree."

"But places are closed now; it's after eleven."

"Oh no: there are plenty of contraband *dancings*. That's why I borrowed Colonel Maltravers' car. We'll drive out to Neuilly. Come along."

"Right ho! But I've only five hundred francs. . . ."

"That'll do; I've plenty. Hurry."

I changed my clothes, and, ten minutes later, was sitting next to Helen in the car. She told me there were various places operating in and around Paris where they danced all night, police regulations notwithstanding, and that René's, the place we were going to, was her favorite haunt.

"You're very gay, then, aren't you?"

"Rather, Paul. There's not much else to do."

“How was Jasper? In his letter, he sounded rather down in the mouth.”

“Jasper’s all right,” she said curtly. “Except his rheumatism.”

I turned to look at her. Her expression was blank. It occurred to me that Helen and Jasper must have quarreled; I wondered at the reason for their separation, at Helen’s life here and at the possibilities of my affecting a reconciliation. Helen sat very still, very erect, one hand on the arm-rest of the car, the other on her knee. I glanced at that one, remembering how she stood in the passage, her hand extended, and how cold it was to my kiss.

I laid my hand on hers, in a gesture of sympathy. I said:

“It’s a far cry from Tipsham, isn’t it? What fun we had there as children.”

“Yes. Oh Lord!” she sighed. “You did hate me, Paul.”

“Can you blame me? You were always ragging me about one thing or another. Do you remember the time you scratched my face?”

“No, I don’t believe I do.”

“Yes, Helen; I called you a soppy kid and you were furious.”

“Yes, now I remember. You see, in a funny sort of way, I was in love with you, Paul.”

“But, Helen, I——”

“Not really with you. With any boy. But so few came to Tipsham. And you were so unimpressed, so shy. . . .”

“One never makes the most of one’s occasions,” I said.

Outside, the rain poured down in torrents. A small stream of water passed through the chink of the window; Helen moved closer to me and took my hand between her hands. I felt the pressure of her palms against it; they were moist and febrile. I was transported back to the old days; almost, I expected Helen to begin apologising, then, while I was silent, to push me away and call me a great booby. She said:

“It was a strange childhood, mine. I had to discover so much for myself. Jasper, of course, was a dear, but what could he do for a young girl?”

I was debating whether I should not mention that other recollection of mine and suggest pleasantly that in her discovery of the phenomena of life, she had not been deprived of collaboration. The gardener’s boy, as a case in point. But I decided not to.

“Did you ever think you would marry Jasper?”  
I asked.

Helen freed her hands. She shook herself, as she might have done before stepping over mud. She uncrossed her legs, stamping one foot on the floor of the car as she did so.

“Jasper, Jasper!” she exclaimed in annoyance. There was a silence. I looked out of the window and said: “We’re at the Porte Maillot!” Helen turned towards me again. She spoke very quickly, in impersonal tones, as though what she was saying bored her yet must be said.

“Why do you suppose Jasper married me? Do you imagine he loved me? Do you imagine I loved him? Come, now, Paul, don’t be such a drivelling idiot!”

“I knew nothing, Helen. . . .”

“As a matter of plain fact, Jasper married me because—well, he married me when I returned from France the second time. Now ask me why I went to France?”

“Well, why——”

“I went to France,” Helen’s voice was cruel and metallic, edged with malice, “I went to France because four of my lovers were there. Do you like that, Paul?”

"It's entirely your affair. I'm not shocked at all, Helen. Why are you mocking me?"

"Well, I didn't see them. One was killed, one went to Gallipoli and I forget about the others. Anyhow, I was sent back in what may be called disgrace."

"But——"

"Don't say *but*. Do you remember the grand, poetic way you talked about woman and the war, in Tipsham? You were like a bloody parson that's gone drunk on reading Swinburne."

"Not at all. I firmly believe what I said."

"Yes, it was all very pretty. Even Jasper could see no more than that in it. Ha, ha, ha!" She laughed bitterly. "That was amusing: Jasper sitting up looking glum while you explained that women's job in war was to smile at soldiers and—what was the figure?—pour rivers of flowers on their hearts! The little V. A. D. at Boulogne! And Jasper staring across the table at his wife, wife he married because she got into trouble in France! And why was that? Well, she simply couldn't help pouring rivers of flowers on the hearts of men, regardless of rank or condition or circumstance! And she didn't deal with poetic young men, whom one glance would inundate with a hot-

house. Why do you suppose, my dear Paul, you were invited to spend the night at Tipsham?"

"I really don't know."

"Very well, I shall tell you. You were asked because I worked on Jasper for a week, and only after the most elaborate influence on my part, he consented."

"But it was only natural for Jasper to ask me——"

"It was. But not then: not after he was married. Still he was fond of you and he adored your father! But when you turned up, it was another matter. You see, he was afraid: mortally afraid of you and me."

"But that is silly, Helen. What did he fear?"

"Don't be so banal, Paul. He was afraid—how shall I say? If somebody had asked him, he would have said that he was afraid you would seduce me."

"You're absurd, Helen. He's my kinsman; besides, I love the man. And anyhow, I'm no Don Juan."

"Wait a mo!" she said. "That would have been his answer if somebody had asked him. But if you could have looked in his heart, you would have known he was afraid *I* would seduce *you*!"

I burst out laughing. Helen gave me one look of anger and scorn, pitiless, withering.

"That, my little friend," she went on, "is precisely what happened, say what you will. I told you I would see you again and explain. Do you know why Jasper wouldn't allow me to go to the village? Do you know why he watched us as we walked to the gate? Poor Jasper! He took his duty as a physician towards a case far more seriously than that of a husband towards his wife. Jasper! Jasper! The damned fool married me to protect me!"

We drew up before a house on the outskirts of Neuilly. It was still raining, but less violently; it was a melancholy drizzle. And the air was chill. There were at least twenty cars drawn up on either side of the road: some were official-looking, other pleasure-cars. Helen alighted, laughed, put her arm through mine and said gaily:

"Here we are, darling!"

There was a wooden gate to the garden; on it hung a single workman's lamp. Helen pressed a bell; the gate was released and, in the dark rain, we felt our way through the garden. Once I landed in a monstrous puddle; Helen tugged at my arm:



"Here, this way, this way!"

"How dark it is!"

"It's all right: follow me. I know the way."

We reached a somewhat dilapidated, two-story, bourgeois house. Helen drummed on the door; it opened immediately. A man in full dress, a dark squat man who looked like a middle-aged South American banker, bowed to her.

*"Bonsoir, Madame."*

Helen greeted him, adding, with a shake of her head in my direction:

*"Monsieur entre avec moi."*

He bowed once more, then led us down a corridor. One could feel the damp exuded by the walls; a musty, flat smell reigned here. Helen whispered:

"That saved you two hundred francs!"

"Thanks!"

"Here: take my arm. We're going in. . . ."

The man opened a double door and we found ourselves in an enormous room, hastily improvised into a night club. Evidently, the place had been four small ground-floor rooms and the walls only recently destroyed. There were perhaps thirty tables, with men and women in evening clothes, Army officers, *femmes du monde*, their daughters, American girls and *grues* smoked and drank. In

one corner were many rows of large nails, on some of which hung coats and hats; there were three doors on one side, one of which, open, revealed a staircase. At the far end of the room I saw a jazz-band, consisting of four weary, perspiring men, Whites.

Over all this artificial gaiety, amid the popping of corks, the screech of laughter, the blare of jazz, there was a dismal, acrid, heart-rending savor of frustration and disgust. A drunken American sat back at a nearby table, belching with gusto for the benefit of a haggard *poule*. Two South Americans were embracing a wisp of a girl, in a lavender tulle dress, synchronously. At another table, five women and five men, among them a Captain of Chasseurs, drank each from his individual bottle of Mumm. Here and there, on the tables, were piles of sandwiches; now and then a dancer, passing, would reach over and seize one, regardless of whose it was. The women all danced with cigarettes in their mouths. Somebody was offering drink after drink of whiskey, neat, to the orchestra. The sharp smoke of cigarettes bit the eyes, and mingled with the odor of damp walls, of cigar butts, of alcoholic regurgitation, of rancid butter, with the powerful scents of women, with a heavy smell of flesh.

We danced. I had never done so with Helen;

I was agreeably surprised to find how smoothly she did and what pleasure it afforded me. Her body was very close to mine, and she stooped, ever so slightly, so that it seemed as though I were taller than she. She had a trick of holding me at the right shoulder so that her fingers grazed my neck.

We finished a bottle of Heidsieck. As I ordered another, Helen said something to the waiter, I could not catch what. He returned, giving her something. It was all done quietly and privately. Dope? Could it be? That would account for the excitement in Helen's eyes, for her pallor and emaciation, for all the hysteria I knew lay below her appearance. But no—that was silly.

We danced again. Now the people at the various tables were mingling with each other. Helen smiled at the Captain of Chasseurs, and said: "*Bonsoir, Gigi.*" The American gave over hiccupping and saluted her. Three women, in one corner, nodded. It seemed she knew almost all the people; I felt many of them kept their eyes on her and here or there spoke of her.

As we danced, Helen said with an astounding sangfroid:

"I've a room upstairs, Paul. Here's the key. Will you come up with me?"

She spread the fingers of her left hand and

pressed against my shoulder-blade, bringing me very near her. I saw her eyes, noting they possessed an expression of great tenderness. I felt her breath, burning, against my cheek.

"But Helen, how can I? There's Jasper . . ."

"Don't be a fool! I'll love you, Paul, how I shall love you! Jasper doesn't matter. Paul . . ."

"But it's a rotten trick, Helen, really. Besides . . ."

"I'm not asking you to love me. All I want is that you come with me. You're off to America to-morrow. An hour, Paul . . ."

"No, Helen, it's impossible. I could never forgive myself. You're Jasper's wife . . ."

"Jasper married me to protect me."

"To protect—but that makes it all the worse!"

She flung me away from her. She said:

"Christ, what a fool you are!"

We returned to our table, drank more Champagne and smoked in silence. Helen said:

"Why shouldn't I give myself to anyone I like?"

"There's no reason in the world."

"Well, then——"

"Jasper is my kinsman," I said, "I have always admired him."

"You're an ass."

“Perhaps.”

“You’re proud of being a stupid sentimentalist.”

“That may be true, too.”

“What do you think it matters to Jasper? Do you think he cares about it? How could he? If he ever haled me into the divorce courts, I could furnish him with the names of fifty co-respondents. Perhaps not all the *names* . . .”

“You may not have a good memory . . .”

“Shut up! You little fool, do you suppose it matters to Jasper? He knows it’s hopeless; I’m lost, lost . . . How shall I ever go back to him? How could I stand it? Good Lord, I couldn’t help telling him all about it. The two American soldiers, yesterday. . . . Then Gillies, and Stafford, and Ker-Watts and . . . why should I tell you? I’m haunted by the ghosts of men that loved me . . . that I loved—it’s all the same. Now talk your slop about hearts and flowers, my dear Paul.”

She rose from the table. I was about to follow suit. She motioned to me to keep my seat.

“Stay here. I’ll be back in a minute. Be sure to wait, however long I am.”

“All right, Helen.”

Leaving me, she went to the table where the Captain of Chasseurs sat. He made room for her

on his chair, placing his arm about her. She joined them in a drink. Then they moved off to dance. I watched various couples gliding by; one woman, as she passed me, chucked me under the chin and said I was a *bébé triste*. I thought she looked like Death warmed up. Then I perceived that Helen and the Captain were there no longer. Bitterly, I wondered whether she were playing me the dirty trick of leaving me here, high and dry, *me posant un lapin*. I determined to spite myself by sitting fast: nothing would move me. I ordered another bottle of Champagne. A little tart joined me. We chatted, easily; then, finding I was no more than company, she left me. By this time the Captain had returned, but there was no sign of Helen.

I looked at my watch: three-thirty. I yawned. My eyes smarted from the smoke; my throat was parched, and I was weary. I noted the hiccoughing American walking unsteady and laborious up the stairs. He waved his hand at the band and said:

“Play *Dixie*: I’m from Sioux City.”

René, the proprietor, sat down with me and had a drink. He talked eloquently of the night-club business and said he hoped to retire next year. He told me he ran a Casino in summer; where, I have forgotten. He also said with a smile that Madame

Tanaquil was one of his best clients and that he liked the Englishmen who came with her. The Colonel Maltravers . . . Monsieur Ponsomby . . . Monsieur Stafford. . . . Very polite, very *chic*. . . . And Madame herself was gay, *enjouée*.

The man from Sioux City came back; he stopped to speak to René and would, I believe, have joined us, had not René drawn him away. Someone called René: I saw a fat, smooth-shaven man with a neck that flung out three balconies of flesh, speaking to him in a low voice. René glanced at me, then away. He led the fat man to the foot of the stairs.

Four-thirty. The crowd was thinning. Two men had passed out; a whole table, glasses, plates, bottles and all, had crashed to the floor with a terrific din. Then there was a fight: a woman, drunk, slapped a man's face. The man retaliated by punching her in the jaw. The girl's escort shook the man's hand in congratulation and the three of them walked out together, all proudly.

Next to me, a woman sobbed hysterically. It seemed, to judge from her cries, that all men were *cochons*. A large, plump woman, with masculine features and a voice that creaked like rusty hinges, but obviously a *femme du monde*, left a party of *gigolos* and came over to console the other. She



had her arm about her shoulders; she was croaking little soft words of endearment: "*Mon chou, chéri, mon petit loup.*"

I leaned back, tried to open a window to let in a breath of fresh air. There was a howl of protest. As I closed the window again, I caught sight of a young girl, leaning against the building, vomiting. Then René walked into the middle of the room, clapped his hands and said: "*Messieurs, dames, on ferme!*"

Several couples rose, took their coats from the wall and moved out. An Indian was begging the orchestra to play one more. René consented. The sweat streaming down their faces, the musicians hacked away at their jazz, like carpenters carving and fashioning something out of a hard material. People kept on leaving. The man from Sioux City picked a bottle from the table, lurched over towards the orchestra and offered the drummer a swig. In one corner, there was a violent argument. Suddenly a man picked up an empty bottle and sent it smashing through the window. Then he laughed with an immense pleasure. René helped him on with his coat, quite calmly.

"Where is Madame?" I asked.

"Oh, a thousand pardons, Monsieur. Madame has gone, perhaps an hour ago. She bid me tell

Monsieur, but I forgot. Will Monsieur forgive me? Madame left with the Capitaine Taupin."

I knew it was not true. I looked at him and asked:

"Are you sure Madame is not upstairs?"

With an assurance that was complete, he said:

"No. Madame was there, in a private room, but she is there no longer. Has Monsieur a car?"

"No: I suppose Madame left in hers."

"Yes. I will arrange for some one to drive Monsieur in. It will be one hundred francs. . . ."

Through a murky dawn, I drove home. A sense of utter disgust invaded me; I was too tired to sleep, too tired to think. I could but sit back, exhausted and resentful. We reached my hotel. The concierge was up and about, dusting the furniture and washing the glass. He greeted me with a smile and gave me a letter and a telegram. The former had been delivered by hand; it was in Helen's writing. I tore open the envelope and read:

*"You are a fool: one must never refuse to accept pleasure. It is all too rare. I do not for a moment believe in any loyalty towards Jasper.*

*Or, if you were sincere, you were sillier still.*

*"Anyhow, bon voyage. I'm sorry I plaquéed you. But I had to keep my car to come home."*

At once, I thought: what a slattern! But somehow I could not find it in my heart to hate her. A pity for her filled me when I reflected how bitter it must have been for her when she offered herself to me and I refused. I saw in her a person obsessed by an idea, a sick person, whose very sickness must have made her life unbelievably a thing of tragedy. For, even when one allowed for the opportunities her life offered—a tolerant martyr of a husband, a life absolutely untrammelled, plenty of money and many friends—still, there must be moments when it was well-nigh unbearable.

In a way, I thought her letter was really rather kind. For example, she could have mentioned each individual of the troop that climbed those stairs to her room, she could have expatiated upon the state of mind that induced her weird satisfaction of the hurt I had inflicted her pride and the terrible fire that consumed her flesh.

I tore her letter up and turned to the telegram. It was written in the typical sloping characters of a French post-office clerk. But its awful legend was:

## JASPER TANAQUIL DIED THIS AFTER- NOON HEART FAILURE END PAINLESS

I have never seen Helen Tanaquil again. She remarried; I received an announcement of the circumstance when I was in California. I did not write: what use was it?

I heard of her quite a little during the next two or three years. Her second husband divorced her: there were eleven co-respondents. The details were swinish. The newspapers made the most of it.

Often, from people I knew in Paris or London, I would get news, whether I sought it or not. Desgouttes knew her and leered as he mentioned her; Yves Lemaire said it was very lucky she remarried and no longer bore my name, because she was really quite beyond the pale. It seems she was expelled from bar after bar, that she was unfeignedly promiscuous and, if rumor were true, she had been taken up off the streets by the police. Grover Bultitude, a secret service man I once knew, told me she had been deported from France. Nowadays, no one ever speaks of her; mercifully, oblivion has swallowed her up.

I think of her frequently. She is more, indeed, than a bawdy myth. I remember her as a girl, when I detested her, because she used to irritate

me and then grasp my hand, between moist palms, abjectly begging my forgiveness. I remember how still and cold she was, as she stood at the door, welcoming me; and how she prophesied she would see me again; and how she did, and what came of it. It seems to me, somehow, that she was shabbily treated, for, in the slaking of her immense thirst, she must have given men a joy and a relief. For, in the main, desire is a sad thing, and love is all we know to lighten it.

Is she dead? Is she in an institution? Is she cured, if that is possible? Rosalie Dwyer, who knew people who had known Helen, assured me she was no nymphomaniac, but rather a normal woman in an age of relaxation. But Rosalie would say that sort of thing. Personally, I rather imagine Helen is very far from us, in Marseille or Calcutta or Kobe; I think she has forgotten everything and everybody in the past, as, day after day, she soothes the desire that ravages her, the malady that she was born with, the bitter, bitter ache of the flesh.

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**THE CASE OF**

**FRITZ LAVATER**

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I LIKED LADEVÈZE'S AND I SUPPOSE I WAS FOR a long time their best client. Certainly the place suited me eminently. It was cheap, the proprietor was a model of courtesy and obliging, his wife was a cook whose like I have not seen since. The several *clientèles* of the establishment were clearly indicated and maintained rigorously separate, the company of which I was a part being quiet, polite and obscure. Since my time the place has gone somewhat to the dogs, due largely to its proximity to the Beaux Arts and that to *via americana* the Rue Jacob. To-day the food is mediocre, prepared according to the best American theories of mass-production and time-economy; the *patronne* has been graduated from kitchen to pay-desk and the three waitresses speak French to clients only to flatter them. There is very little left of the atmosphere that pervaded it in 1911, when the *patronne* cooked and the *patron* served the workmen at eleven-thirty, the shopkeepers at twelve-thirty, and such *habitués* as belonged to neither class at one.

You were never told clearly when you should arrive, yet if you went there more than a few times, instinctively you fell into the way of the place, regarding a breach of its etiquette as reprehensible indeed. And, best of all, in those days you enjoyed as fine a lunch as you could hope for, illustrated

with the most toothsome little *vin rosé* in the world for three francs and a half. "*Eheu fugaces . . . !*" to quote the catch-word of my old acquaintance Fritz Lavater.

Fritz Lavater! What memories the name conjures up! I see myself headed for Ladevèze's on a foggy evening in January, after a tedious and diaphoretic afternoon at the Sorbonne, my arms aching under the heavy load of a Greek lexicon (how proud of it I was when I bought it and how I loathed it now!), my head dizzy from the national fug of the seminar-room, my throat avid for the fragrant warmth of a cigarette. It is six-thirty. Through the mist, the lights twinkle with the rich softness particular to gas-light; trees rise up in incredible shapes, sketched, as they are, on the vague, shifting background of mist, by the capricious play of light. One seems to smell the river and the green earth of the Luxembourg as soon as one passes beyond the market of the Rue de Buci. Before I realise it, I am in the tobacco-shop next to Ladevèze's.

A particularly cordial welcome greeted me that night. Madame Ladevèze came from her kitchen, abandoning a *bœuf bourguignon* to the god of cookery (who must indeed be a French deity!), and shaking me vigorously by the hand. I knew

something unaccustomed had occurred. I looked around me and my eyes found the reason for the *patronne's* demonstration of pleasure. A new client, or rather, an old client come back.

Madame Ladevèze presented me to a tall, middle-aged man. The first thing I noted about him was his snow-white hair, which, later in the evening, the *patron* told me, was due to sorrow over his wife's death. He evinced an eager cordiality, though his eyes never altered in expression and his jaw was most firmly set. One sensed his affability in a nervously forthright precipitance of gesture.

"Monsieur Lavater is, like you, from over there," our hostess explained; "he and his *pauvre dame* used to come here often. He is also a savant. You will like to know him!"

I sat down by the newcomer, knowing it quite needless, since he was used to the ways of the house, to point out that "over there" meant, to Madame Ladevèze, any part of Europe outside of France, whence came letters with stamps to be later given her for her nephew, or that my scholarly title meant merely that I had just passed my *baccalauréat*, and, redolent of the *lycée*, I was at the Sorbonne. The *patronne* knew I spent the summer at Karlsbad and she knew I could unravel the

mysteries of French official documents: to her I was an Austrian and a sage.

"You come here often, young man?"

He was the only person who had not irritated me by that term of address.

"Yes. You see, I have my napkin, changeable once a week!"

"I came here often. I shall now, I suppose!" He sighed. "It is not the same Paris, alas! But oh my God! it's better than Pesth!"

There was an accent of agony in his tone. It was possibly because I guessed he was unhappy, that I had not resented the appellation "young man"; at any rate, there was no patronage about it, it came naturally, absent-mindedly almost. I recalled the *patronne's* mention of his *pauvre dame* and I felt sorry for this quiet, tall, white-headed, dull-voiced man, as I observed his neat but shabby clothes, his nails bitten to the quick and the red rim his frayed collar caused on his abnormally long neck, with its two concave hollows and the gibbous Adam's apple they flanked. . . .

I had occasion to discover more about him one Sunday afternoon when I stayed longer than usual at the *bistrot* after lunch. The proprietor announced that the next drink was on the house.

His wife, her cooking finished, sat at the table next to her husband, facing Louis, a young workman with an indefinite but real claim on Ladevèze, possibly a fortuitous child *d'un autre lit*.

I questioned them about Lavater.

"You remember his wife, Louis?"

The workman nodded.

"Was she old or young?" I asked.

"About sixty," Louis answered, "she was quite solid and rather fine-looking!"

He mimed her distinct adipose protuberances from four points of vantage, as though to imprison the air within the hollow of his hands. Then he drew himself up on his seat to indicate her height.

"Much older than he. About twenty years older," the proprietor put in, "he isn't more than forty-two now!"

Madame Ladevèze championed her sex: she was surely no more than five or at most ten years her husband's senior. Argument ensued. Louis doubtless came the nearest to the truth when he announced that she must have been fifty-six, if Lavater was forty.

"But how she loved him, *mossieu*," said old Madame Ladevèze, "really I have never seen such an example of true devotion. She would watch out for the least thing. If he went out without

his coat, back she sent him. If there weren't two portions of *boudin*, though she adored it, she gave the only portion to him. She was always caressing him at the table. And when they spoke to each other in French it was always '*mon chou*,' '*mon petit*' or '*mon gosse*.' To us she would speak of him as '*mon enfant*' or even '*mon filston*.' It was beautiful affection that gave one pleasure to witness it!"

Ladevèze cleared his throat.

"She loved him, yes. Solicitously and profoundly. But *bon dieu!* how in God's name did he bear it? I should think her constant attention would have been terribly wearing!"

His wife demurred.

"No, it was a beautiful relationship. She gave him everything; no wonder he misses her. She was, you see, almost more of a mother than of a wife. Really, I have never seen so touching a combination of mother and wife!"

And she repeated for emphasis several times that it gave one pleasure to witness them.

"They are fine people, the Hungarians!" Louis said, "there's one in our gang—the light-haired fellow, you know—and everyone likes him!"

Ladevèze took another view of the matter.

"It's all very well," he opined, "for a woman

to look after her husband, to make things comfortable for him. But she went too far. By being too *bigrement* maternal, she ceased to prove a desirable wife!"

Louis smiled. A racy description ensued on the *mise-en-scène* of the marital relations of the Magyar couple. Madame Ladevèze contributed her quota, gathered from her own domestic experience. Other subjects, anecdotal for the most part, arose. But they did return once to the Lavaters.

"Do you remember——" Madame Ladevèze gasped for breath to bring out, with properly effective gusto, the excellent reminiscence. "Oh, do you remember, Ladevèze, the night of the *jour de l'an* of 1907?"

Apparently he did. Likewise Louis.

"It was," averred the latter, "a *bombe* without parallel save in military annals. The Lavaters brought with them the best wine I have ever tasted in my life. It was called Honey-ray. . . ."

"A Tokay," I suggested; "they call the region the *côte d'or*. . . ."

"That's it! *J'en suis toqué!*"

The bad pun passed unnoticed. The *patron* interrupted:

"It was a most amusing evening. The Lavaters sat over there!" He pointed to the corner near



the door. "We had *paté*, *truffles*, two species of boudin, turkey, goose, and——"

"The *patron* was very generous with Champagne," put in his wife, "and the *dame* of M. Lavater drank till she was red in the face: red as a beet!"

"They stayed on after the others left," Louis said, "and remained locked in an embrace, while they ate and drank with a single disengaged hand. We toasted them in Champagne, then in Cognac—the *patron's* best 1884! They kept on drinking. Presently, I don't know how it happened! but they were on the floor, *mossieu*; they were crawling about under the table, their arms firmly about each other. Red in the face . . . laughing till the tears ran down their cheeks . . . punctuating their sallies with affectionate caresses: commas, semicolons and periods of kisses: big, heavy, juicy ones, *Mossieu Tanaquil*!"

"And we were watching them!" Madame Ladevèze said, "holding our sides with amusement. Oh, how funny, how funny it was! But one must have been there to appreciate it. I can only suggest for the imagination! Their goblets of Champagne on the floor beside them . . . her absurd red face . . . the loud kisses . . . and her funny maternal voice talking to him now in their jargon,

now in Christian: '*Mon petit*,' she said, '*mon petit . . . mon gogosse . . . mon fils . . . embrasse ta maman!*' "

"It sounds ridiculous, *mossieu*," Louis said, after the loud laughter of the *patronne* had subsided into a heavy, hysterical breathing, "but I assure you it was not. This woman was older than he, yet there was nothing wrong or stupid in her kissing him so violently nor yet in her calling him her son, and in his answering 'Mother!' To relate it makes it sound grotesque, but upon my word, *Mossieu* Tanaquil, it was the most natural thing in the world. It was very wisely said by the *patronne*: one must have been there to have the means of appreciation!"

Good old Madame Ladevèze once more burst into high, shrill laughter, repeating the details over again, as though I had not heard them. Then a client came in: a taxi-chauffeur for a drink. The conversation changed aspect, but through it all my mind could not help dwelling with amused speculation upon this extraordinary couple, with two decades between them, and the gay spectacle of their curiously naïve relations in the throes of excited hilarity.

The year wore on. February found me surviving the ordeal of my first *licence* examination, to

receive the hearty congratulations of the Ladevèzes who rewarded my scholarly qualities by treating the house to a round of liqueurs: "a little glass in honor of that good *Mossieu* Tanaquil, who will be a great teacher one of these days!" Fritz Lavater joined us and grew reminiscential.

"Ah, the period of happiness! Youth—the first examination in the university—the career! *Manet alta mente repostum!* Sir, I too have been a student: this side idolatry! *A Privatdozent*, I was, at Cracow, young man, and later a confidential secretary to the minister of public instruction. I have known great professors: I sat under Hagenfueller and Immergraenzel, and not the least of their disciples was I, Fritz Lavater! *Eheu fugaces!*"

I questioned him indirectly on his past, but he vouchsafed no more than generalities.

"You know Austria, yes, but that is not Hungary! I have been to Vienna several times. I was there for the Congress of Classicists. I knew Garfinkle, of California, whose doctorate at Giessen marked an epoch in the study of the Classics. I knew Von Reinhardt-Staettner, he who showed how Plautus and Terence influenced all the drama of Europe in the Middle Ages. I possess by heart all the odes and satires of Horace! I have written

poems and addresses in the language of Juvenal and Quintus Curtius. Ah, but what is that now, with me here in Paris! *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni!*"

Our relation grew less ceremonial as time wore on. He always had a piece of scholarly advice for his young friend, which he underlined, as it were, with a Latin phrase, then abruptly asked me its context, and was happy as a boy when I failed to know or guess the answer.

He gave an impression of erudite and profound experience. Of course, I was in my 'teens and scarcely competent to judge the extent of his knowledge, yet it seemed to me that a man who could quote Tibullus, Macrobius and Aulus Gellus off-hand was more than a casual student. I flattered him and aided myself not a little by submitting difficult passages to his consideration; once indeed he indicated a reading to me that had escaped the notice of my professor, who congratulated me heartily.

I discovered by accident in the Bibliothèque Nationale that Fritz Lavater was the author of a thesis published in Vienna on the influence of Roman literature on certain South Slav Christian manuscripts: his delight on my informing him of the fact was grateful to see. He asked me whether

I would obtain a card of admission to the library for him, and, through the Austro-Hungarian consulate, I obtained it. Thenceforward he never failed to impart to me what he had studied or come upon in his daily work; he began to go regularly to the library and even spoke of engaging upon a piece of research. Once, in effect, he invited me to his rooms: two large rooms on the Quai de l'Horloge, on the top floor of a house near Madame Rolland's, with views both on the river and on that jewel, the Place Dauphine. He provided me with a pipe, fragrant gold-yellow Bulgarian tobacco and a glass of imported Sherry. And he talked glowingly of university days in Hungary, in Vienna, in Cracow.

One by one, the classics passed before my eyes as he evoked them; they assumed a radiant and living actuality under the magic coloring of his imagination; they grew suddenly to seem alive and about us, here in these large, square rooms heavily lined with bookshelves, clouded with blue-gray smoke and perfumed by the blended freshness of the air that sifted in through the old windows, the delicate aroma of high pure tobacco and the mellow warmth of sherry-wine, evocative of sun-bathed Spanish Xeres and of Ceres, Mother of All-Living! It was a memorable evening indeed; his happiness

at my own obvious pleasure adding a welcome touch of understanding between us.

I often puzzled over the man's story. There was beyond doubt, I told myself, some mystery in his life. He had done something or something had been done to him to prevent his continuing as *dozent* in Cracow. For his *métier* was that of Ganymede to the gods of learning. Never had I known a man so eminently able to impart the beauties of the classics: he possessed his Latin and Greek perfectly.

I wondered, too, about his wife: the tall, portly red-faced woman who attended all his wants, who treated him as a child, who even had been known to sit under the table clasping him to her bosom as they drank in Ladevèze's to the happiest of new years for 1907. . . .

As a matter of fact, I was to learn all about him very soon. He came to tell me quite voluntarily—if one excepts a certain impetus due to the sentimentality of anniversaries and an uncertain impetus due to a lengthy, votive potation of Tokay, Champagne and *fine*. It all happened on the eve of January 1, 1912.

I had been invited to several *reveillon* parties but all of them took place very late in the evening.



So I happened to be dining at Ladevèze's at about eight o'clock. The place was slightly but touchingly decorated; the menu bore many additional dishes with supplementary price in brackets; the *patron* started the evening by offering one a drink: "*l'apéro—c'est le patron qui le paie!*" As I drank my *anis*, he informed me that *Mossieu* Lavater had announced the arrival of three bottles of Tokay. He was due in a few minutes.

"Look on this, my young friend," said Lavater as he entered, "never have you tasted this, I warrant!"

He unwrapped the bottles with fittingly respectful solicitude, then held them up to the light.

"From Zemplin, young man, from the golden hill of Hungary. This is wine of Emperors! You do not buy it: it is for Emperors and Kings and Princes alone. They call it beams of honey, and rightly. This is no Keresztur or Szadany or Satoral-Ujhely, fine as these vintages are. No, no, no: here you have the one and only royal, noble, divine wine of Mezes-Malé! To drink of it is to be a god—you are privileged, Tanaquil: *non licet omnibus adire Corinthum.*"

We sat down at a table in one corner where the *patron*, his wife and Louis joined us. Madame Ladevèze had put her heart into the preparation



of the food: the effect of her very feeling had brought her long and talented technique to achieve genius.

I have since dined at Fürst Schwarzenberg's, I have had food ordered three weeks ahead at Foyot and Paillard's, I have had a pig killed before my eyes, in the island of Mallorca and then served to me on a golden dish; I have eaten, in Marienbad, chicken livers intended for King Edward VII; and, in Toulouse, once, I tasted a *fricandeau* of chicken à la *Béchamel*, prepared by a pupil of the great Carême. But I do not know that I have ever enjoyed a repast quite so well as that night's. It is possible the Tokay, towards the end of it, cast over its entirety a golden halo of wonder. Where Lavater managed to get it from I don't know; he did tell me that a relative of his was employed in the royal distillery at Mezes-Malé, I think. But I am not sure. At any rate, in my life there was never such a feast. And that must be all the more signal since it must be remembered that we ate from the dishes and drank from the glasses of a tiny, obscure Paris *bistrot*.

Lavater was constantly replenishing my plate, the *patron* my glass. Before we reached the ceremony of the Tokay, I was exhilarated far beyond my wont. As for Lavater he was never so gay.

Sally followed sally; his eyes gleamed, his laughter rang through the room. All through the meal, phrase followed phrase: "Drink this wine: *Regis ad exemplar!*" and "*Pauci sumus quos aequus amavit Jupiter*" and "*Bis repetita placent!*" Jests were bandied, Louis plunged into rabelaisian details of army-life; the *patronne* described, for the benefit of her guests, the vicissitudes of her wooing by the *patron*, the latter contradicted her, urging other and even more scabrous interpretations; Lavater told us of Hungary, Poland, and Russia.

But unfortunately something occurred to ruin the evening. The meal was over: coffee and liqueurs had been disposed of, Lavater's proffered Havana cigars were slowly expiring in circular, wrinkled clouds of blue and ambrosial smoke.

Madame Ladevèze—alas, for her kindly soul!—had the imprudence to say: "Oh, *Mossieu* Lavater! What a pity! Do you remember, five years gone, you and your *dame*! *C'qu'on a rigolé, bon sang!* How she would love . . ."

I happened to be watching him as she spoke. It was as though he had been, of a sudden, whipped in the face. He went dead white. His eyes blazed. Then they became filled with tears and his face grew very red and I noted his concave hollows growing still more stove-in, while his salient

Adam's apple hung forward, more papulous than ever.

The others observed nothing. He continued conversing for a few moments.

Then he glanced at his watch, turned to me:

"Time to go! *Dura lex sed lex*. Please come along with me: I've some cigars and Sherry at home, so if you're doing nothing . . . ? *Dulcia loquimur arva!*"

It was an abrupt step but our hosts seemed to see nothing amiss; and from the tone of his voice, I thought his suggestion was more than an invitation. Why, I do not know, but he seemed to me to be a very melancholy man who was pleading for help. . . .

He was terribly agitated, far more violently excited than drink could have made him. He pushed me through the streets, holding my arm in a vise. He spoke quickly, with a nervous tremble in his voice. He mentioned our friendship, laid stress on the fact that I was the only companion he possessed in the world. When we reached the house he climbed the stairs with alacrity; whisked my coat, hat and stick from me; placed me in a chair; perfunctorily and swiftly poured me a drink; gave me a cigar; lighted it, and walked up and

down the room. Two or three times he gazed at me, speculatively. Then he continued his silent march.

I knew better than to question him. I was right, for presently he burst out into his story.

I cannot find words to convey the exact manner of his telling. He was really talking more to himself than to me; his sentences had little sequence, not a few of them were unintelligible. The story came in staccato phrases which he seemed to jerk from him and throw out. I followed him as best I could. The monologue ran somewhat in this fashion.

“My wife . . . you heard them talking. She’s dead, you know. She died two years ago. It was a terrible thing. You see——” he paused, then burst out, “I am a foundling. Probably born a bastard, I don’t know. Yes. Adopted at four by Geheimrath Vollgang. He died when I was twenty, leaving me his money. I went to the university, did well, got my doctor’s degree very young. Lived in Budapesth. Happy. Gay days. Youth. *Eheu fugaces!* Married at thirty. Wife older than I. Met her at a variety show. *Du lieber Gott!*”

The sentences came haphazard in French or in the soft accents of an Hungarian speaking German. It arrested my interest at the time to hear the tragic

details pronounced with the Magyar drawl that mellows the hardness of the German, imparting a richness and a suavity to it, until it might almost be a Latin tongue. He went on:

“It’s good for a man to marry an older woman; they love you . . . maternally! Ha! That word: maternally! Yes, terrible word!

“Well, I married this beloved creature and lived happily—oh! it was too happy to last forever! But ten years of love! God, what a beautiful existence. Imagine, after the first year—got leave from the university—stayed in London—then . . . When we arrived in Pesth, I discovered . . . she discovered . . . My God, man, imagine: *She discovered that she was my mother!* A man put together details that seemed definitely to prove it! She had, as it happened, had a child which she abandoned. She was an actress, you know . . . variety . . . toured a lot in her youth . . . pretty gay, I suppose. Well, this blackmailing fellow found the thing out . . . submitted details to us . . . we saw no way out. Incest: imagine! Mother and son! The awful crime, the unspeakable agony of sin! We resolved to kill ourselves together. Revolver or cyanide or opium or the river! But——”

He paused here, cleared his throat, drank down

his Sherry, walked on silently and continued after a long hush:

"Incest! Terrible! I want you to see it: the wife you love, your mother! Can you understand the depths of shame, of terror, of disgust we plumbed? And loving each other all the time!

"Well, sir, what follows illustrates two things: first, the triumph of nature over what would seem fact, secondly, the triumph of intellect over prejudice and tradition. We found a way out. Good! Yes! I thought: Sarah, Abraham's half-sister: Incest. Tamar and Ammon: see Samuel: Incest. I thought of theories: families marooned on desert island . . . live there forty years . . . duty to propagate and continue civilization: Incest! Yes. And I knew how the Medes, the Persians, the Egyptians and to-day the Cambodgians countenanced incest. I did not know my Quintus Curtius, Strabo, Herodotus in vain. I was miserable, but *exceptis excipiendis*, why should I not have been happy? Yes. I fought with myself, then, as I thought I might act unjustly. I said: *Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*. Good! Lubbock, Spencer, MacLennan were on my side: exogamy was a superstition ingrown through primitive stupidity. Much of it lay in greed: the desire not to allow a father's inheritance to remain forever

in the same family. Anyhow, Tilly and I wouldn't have children . . . dangerous at her age . . . and—confound it: I loved her! Remember Caligula; recall Blackstone on the 'feeble coercion of spiritual courts'; consider the Franks in Gaul and the trouble of the Christians; follow the Œdipus myth with the various *addenda*: old Clubfoot had to be confused with Judas to make the story dreadful. Take note of it in the Albanian, Finnish, Bulgarian, Turkish and Cypriote branches of mythology. Read the American anthropologist, Higsby! I did, tracing it to its lair! It saved my life, for it cured my prejudices. Not my fault, after all? Yes. I conquered every human, so-called decent, revulsion. Thus the victory of intellect over convention."

He examined me, as though he had suddenly decided I was shocked. But happily he had not taken that precaution in the beginning. He continued to walk. I asked:

"And your wife?"

"Yes, Tanaquil, *mon cher*, my wife! She loved me. Nothing else mattered. Can *you* appreciate *that*? Our passion and the awful secret between us, brought to mind constantly by blackmail. You will see in a moment what I meant by nature tri-



umphing over seemingly evident fact! Come, another drink!"

I accepted. As I laid down my glass (he had not kept his eyes off me) he returned to the subject.

"We left Pesth. Traveled. Paris, Nice, Barcelona, Madrid, Oporto, Teneriffe, Tunis, Algiers, Rome, Venice, Florence, Naples, Crete, Athens, Constantinople. O dear Lord! how good she was! how kind and how solicitous!

"She seemed to know another Spring: *agnovit veteris vestigia flammæ!* What an existence of sweet happiness. *Aïe, aïe!* dear Tilly! We grew to regard ourselves quite naturally: it was like the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, like the survivors of Noah! I grew to call her 'Mother' and she would call me 'Son' or 'Sonny'!

"It is possible, is it not? Nature knows terrible and dire ways but Nature can elect gentle and humane remedies for the direst of them. Well, in fine . . . how shall I say? . . . Our unique position . . . our love springing from such diverse and cordial causes . . . our misfortune together, which was a good fortune, since ill fortune must be lonely to exist . . . all these things made us the most felicitous of mortals. We looked back on the dreadful day of our discovery of the secret with

little regret; indeed, *notavimus diem albo lapillo*. We traveled about. For years. Six months here with my wife. Three months there. Then . . . at last . . . O God! back to Pesth!

“A week there: fear of the blackmailer. A fortnight. No word. Desire to leave. Fear. We were paralysed. Waiting for him. No courage to move. Then——”

Tears came into his eyes. He pressed his hand theatrically against his brow. His voice died down into a full, guttural wail. Anguish tapered off into a sob.

“Well?”

“Well, *mon cher*, he died three days after we arrived. Two weeks after his death came a letter from him. O dear Lord!”

I let him weep. It is uncomfortable to listen to a man weeping. There is something offensive about it, an indecency I found more profoundly distasteful than his story had been.

At last he gathered his faculties.

“It was not true! Do you see: it was all framed up. He had traced her career, seen his chance to attack her when I married her. We had supported him for years on the strength of a trumped-up charge of . . . my Lord! . . . incest!”

“It was well known that I was a foundling.

Records are easy to trace. He forged three affidavits. Then——”

“But why didn’t you verify the thing in the first place?”

“But think of the shock, Tanaquil? And his story was eminently plausible; he was a skillful swindler, yes, an artist in superchery, yes!”

I had to hide a smile when I thought of his sociological studies for justification—the weeks he had spent with Spencer, Montesquieu, Simmel, Duerkheim, the Bible. While surely an hour or two of real examination of the blackmailer’s falsity would have saved him?

“The terrible letter!”

“But why was it terrible! I should have thought it an immense relief!”

He talked to me earnestly, didactically almost. Here was something he wished to impress on one he believed opposed to the idea from the outset. His voice was firm, his words rang——

“We had lived years believing the awful thing true. Incestuous, we had defeated the ghastly shame that had threatened to throttle us. We were happy; years and years we traveled; France, Spain, Portugal, the Canaries, Africa, Greece, Italy, Turkey. I used to call her ‘Ma’ and she called me ‘Sonny’.

“We knew our relation criminal and sinful but our love was greater. It was a superb love, combining all the known loves in the world. Respect for the creator, for the created; respect for the wife, for the husband.

“And then to arrive in Pesth, to find it was all a lie, that we were *not* incestuously bound . . . I . . . O God! . . . my wife . . . my dear wife . . . she——”

“What a wonderful relief she must have experienced!”

“Relief? Relief? Good Lord, no! What a horrible calamity! Why, she couldn’t bear it! Don’t you see, you damned fool, she committed suicide!”



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**THE CASE OF  
ARISTIDE  
DE SAINT HEMME**

*"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart."*

*Byron*

*"With man, most of his misfortunes are occasioned by man."*

*Pliny the Elder*

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BIARRITZ! ALWAYS I AM PLEASED WHEN I arrive there, always pleased when it is time to leave. For some reason—or, quite possibly, for none—the place flourishes in the bed of my heart as a fine flower of artificiality. All here is blue, all is artificial; the waters take their tones, the sky its tints from the eyes of the women. And it is well known that all women in Biarritz have blue eyes—even those elsewhere presumably brown-eyed.

Biarritz! It evokes the stench of gold (for gold does smell!); it conjures up, in my mind, the hard glitter and the brash sound of moneys passing across the green baize of the Casino tables, while hard by, almost within earshot, the Pilgrim of Poverty lies silent in the little graveyard of Saint Jean de Luz! Ryecroft and Raffles, bedfellows in a foreign country; and ever the clink of shekels. . . .

It is of infinite justice that the only virgin in Biarritz should be set on a rock at sea, with the additional precaution of an iron rail about her. Somehow, too, I think it is right that it should have been here Bedrich Zatloukal refused to entertain the shameless suggestions of a certain Grand Duke; that here a famous and extremely jealous gynecologist's family should have been increased by three sons, none of which he fathered; that Yves

Lemaire, succumbing to the chastest eyes this side of Hollywood should have fallen head over heels into the matrimony wherein he founders as I write these lines. To Biarritz, as well, falls the considerable honor of being the birthplace of the gallant Captain Desgouttes. That is meet.

I vision Fritz Lavater here, sitting bolt upright on the sands of the Côte des Basques, pondering the idiosyncrasies of conviction and the vicissitudes of race. I am thankful it was from Biarritz that Rosalie Dwyer sent me the supreme telegram: "*One kid of the goats for a sin offering,*" a few moments before eloping with Jay Wallinghast Tiergarten, of Milwaukee, Wis., and Palm Beach, Florida.

And Mrs. Jerry Hartzog choosing the azure coast as a snaring-ground for the bull of the Balkans, Dr. Scietoslav Ferdischenko . . . and Professor Higsby, collecting anthropological data on the Basques . . . and Eileen, his daughter, picturesquely throwing her uncomfortable bonnet over those windmills destined to grind out so profitably for her . . . and Artemys Lynne, frigid in scorn, with, on her countenance, a look I have not seen paralleled by the most capable of play-actors . . . and . . .

*Aristide De Saint Hemme* ■

And Jean-Marie Aristide Robert Armand Merle de Saint-Hemme.

It is a story frequently told, and of the simplest. The most complete account of it is that given to me by Captain Desgouttes and Lieutenant Laroche. Into his version, the former has breathed his usual sprightliness; the latter, for his part, supplies most of the essential facts.

I have always liked Lieutenant Laroche, both because of his pleasant character and because of his war record. He was decorated to the *n*th power by a grateful government in 1916 for having captured an entire company of Boches single-handed. Having been left behind in his billet during a sudden movement of troops, when he awakened in the morning, his arm utterly numb, his charmer's moist palm on his flushed face and her hair trailing over his eyes, he discovered the house was filled with Landwehr. By rousing the lady, pointing out to her where lay her duty and concealing himself in a closet, he was enabled to entrap the entire company in her room, thence to march them back to a captivity they welcomed.

I admired him for the double homage to Venus and Mars. (It is not related whether the patriotic

lady received any reward other than the satisfaction obtained in the performance of her duty.)

De Saint-Hemme was of an old Southern family. Towards the end of his life, he was wont to assert that an ancestor of his is recorded at the Court of Henry III. When at school, he did not go so far back. Voltaire mentions a Count Régis de Saint-Hemme somewhere; René-Imbert de Saint-Hemme set sail from Pasajes with La Fayette; two of the name fell gloriously in the War of 1870. It was when boasting of these that De Saint-Hemme fought his only fight while at school, a circumstance which earned the protection of Laroche for him.

He was very quiet as a boy, well-behaved, industrious and scholastically successful. His aloofness won him no friends, but it made him no enemies. He lived in Paris with his grandmother, the Dowager Countess. His mother died shortly after his birth, from disappointment, Desgouttes avers, at the child being a boy. His father, a flashy little man with a taste for farm-girls, somewhat redeemed from total vulgarity by his love of thoroughbred horses, showed scant interest in his son and visited him but rarely.

In the earlier days, the humble devotion of De Saint-Hemme flattered Laroche. Soon, however,

it palled; then it became so distasteful as to create a certain embarrassment between them.

De Saint-Hemme was so gentle a lad, so resigned, almost feminine. Nor did the fact that to Laroche alone befell aught but a cold civility exactly please him. Then the fellow always had his hands on one, either to stroke one's sleeve, to pat one on the back or to hold one's hand too long in the shaking. Once, indeed, in a moment of excitement, he embraced Laroche in a manner the latter did not relish.

Yet, all in all, there was never anything directly to reproach him with. And if one betrayed displeasure, his eyes grew dark with pain, so that Laroche felt rather a brute and sought to dispel De Saint-Hemme's chagrin. All the while, however, he held it against De Saint-Hemme that he should have to do this.

Shortly before Laroche went to the Military Academy of Saint-Cyr, there came an open break. Laroche was then sowing the sort of wild oats that were to bear so superb a crop during the war; there was a girl called Arlette who admitted him to the little court she held at the Café d'Harcourt, finally promoting him to the position of Prince Consort. She was an extraordinary girl, Arlette: love was her religion, mischief her recreation. An Argen-

tine gaga once gave her a thousand francs, and that very night she insisted on sleeping, for the first time in her life, under a bridge. Rodin began a statute of her which she smashed in high dudgeon, alleging it to be a caricature—— “. . . and showing no respect at all for my breasts!” She loved Laroche for quite four months.

Occasionally De Saint-Hemme joined them at the café. This was well, until Arlette generously decided De Saint-Hemme must also be provided for. The lacuna in his life was to be filled by one Reine, a friend of Arlette's. De Saint-Hemme remained aloof and ceremonious, a state so new to Reine that she became madly infatuated with him.

Gradually, in little minor details, a word here, a look there, mostly instinctively, Laroche apprehended that De Saint-Hemme was jealous of him. When they were alone, he would lecture Laroche upon his profligacy, he would try to belittle Arlette, he would inveigh against woman in general as being a unmanning influence.

Meanwhile Reine made no progress in her courtship. De Saint-Hemme was not priggish, he seemed simply to enjoy vicariously, through the enjoyment of Laroche. And Reine had glimpsed expectantly a perfect heaven of gay carnality. When she kissed a man, it should be a landslide,

a maelstrom, an earthquake, a monsoon and the band of the Garde Républicaine playing the *Marseillaise* inside him all at the same time. One evening, she leaned across the table and kissed De Saint-Hemme full on the lips.

He did not budge, his expression did not change a whit. He was ice—but no! ice melts. He was stone—but stone boulders would have worn to pebbles under Reine's mouth. Then he narrowed his eyes until but a sombre flame shone from between the lids. Taking his handkerchief out of his breast-pocket, he proceeded to wipe off his lips.

Of course Reine slapped his face with gusto. But she went to bed crying that night. Nor did she reappear. Arlette, however, avenged her; she read her private riot act to the young man, appending various epithets that caused an irremediable break.

“At Saint-Cyr,” said Laroche, “De Saint-Hemme proved to be an excellent cadet. We liked him, though he was even more aloof than he had been at school. He appeared to have gained a greater self-reliance; there was no vestige in him of any softness. He could drill a squad as sternly as Desgouttes himself. And he never fell off his horse, as Desgouttes did, in the manœuvres of 1913.



“He would no longer share our distractions, but he did share our hardships. What made him singular was his excessive reserve. Later, too, when we had leave, most of us used to meet; but nobody ever knew how De Saint-Hemme spent his. Once he returned with a very black eye. . . .

“He did not walk with the least exaggeration of rhythm; his voice, even in excitement, was of virile pitch; he never doffed his ceremonious ways.

“On one occasion, he was placed under arrest. Various rumors circulated, but no one knew any facts. He gave somebody a package, to be opened only in case illness befell him: we believed he contemplated suicide. He spoke not at all; he burned every letter and every photograph in his quarters. (He was the only one of us without a woman’s likeness to grace his bureau.)

“The day of his Court-Martial approached. His attitude was at once desperate and meek: he looked haggard, ill. A woman was known frequently to interview the Colonel; once she was seen emerging from the Orderly Room with her son, a mere lad. He was sniveling; as De Saint-Hemme passed down the corridor, he somewhat obviously looked aside. . . .

“But nothing happened. You see, this was at the very end of July. In August, De Saint-Hemme

was fighting with the rest of us—white gloves and all!”

Some time after the War, Desgouttes and Laroche, on leave together in Paris, encountered De Saint-Hemme. He greeted them like long-lost friends. For a few moments and a glass of Port, he joined them at Cintra. He was in rather dismal mood.

“I almost envy you fellows, still in the Service!”

“Yes,” grumbled Desgouttes, “look at me. I was Acting Colonel. Where am I now?”

“Why did you resign?” asked Laroche, practically.

De Saint-Hemme sighed. There ensued a brief silence. Then he, so rarely confidential, found himself pouring out his heart to these men, because they had been his comrades in battle, because he was a little sad and because the port was rather particularly good. He thawed; his thought flowed like water too long prisoned.

“Nothing has been the same since the Armistice,” he lamented, “I don’t seem to be living now; something is dead in me. And every one is so restless!”

It would have been difficult to think of any one more restless than himself. He would sketch a

gesture, his palm open, his arm stretched out. But immediately he would close his hand, draw in his arm, run his long nails through his moustache, shrug his shoulders, twitch, and adjust the hair that straggled into his eyes.

“Why not take up Americans?” asked Desgouttes frivolously.

De Saint-Hemme paid no attention. Now his fingers fumbled at the knot of a tie that required no fastening.

“Nothing will replace the War for me,” he pursued, “that was my life! In those days—do you remember?—you and you and I—and the men, the men! Those we commanded, those we obeyed; the men we saved and the men we killed! That was beautiful! All us men—brothers—heart to heart—shoulder to shoulder—one thought in our minds, one fear in our bellies, one joy in our veins. . . . Hundreds and thousands of men . . .”

“But look here——”

De Saint-Hemme would not allow Desgouttes’ objection.

“It is all so complicated now. And I am so bored—bored as if gluttoned! You remember, Laroché, how of all of us, I was the one least influenced by women. I think, perhaps, you will recall my quoting Schopenhauer in the old days. It was

true; it still holds. The War, you see, abolished Woman for me. It eliminated her; she disappeared from the face of the earth. Or practically so.

“War killed Woman, it buried her. For War is a question of men and for men; the rest is not even literature. Woman is too soft for war, too flabby, too graceful, too impractical. If women could suddenly have given birth to adult men, then they might have been of some use to us. But otherwise—even as nurses . . . Pooh, I always preferred a man to look after me! And as for recreation——”

His voice fell. Desgouttes’ eye brightened. Laroche drummed on the table. De Saint-Hemme drained his glass.

“What a joke! What a ridiculous idea to imagine that Woman can provide one with any pleasure worth tasting after one has known the ardors and endurances of War. To me there was almost an obscenity in soldiers having commerce with women. It was as if the Archangel Gabriel suddenly visited Earth and married a trull. For War killed Woman; and it seemed to me that in those years, the men were trafficking with the dead. . . .”

“Good heavens! Do you mean that——”

“I express myself clearly, I believe! It is that

I am more reflective. Because, from the beginning, being an artist, I see things more clearly. Objects are at once outlines to me. You fellows catch sight of one tree and miss the woods. War is Man. Think of any shape that rises to your sight when you visualize War and tell me whether it is not essentially a male shape. War was our victory, too, in the damnable battle of Sexes, and now we have foregone it. . . .”

Nobody spoke for a moment. A slight embarrassment arose, for there did not seem to be anything one might say. Laroche asked, for the sake of talking:

“What are you doing now?”

“I went back to sculpting,” said De Saint-Hemme, “I have had a certain success. But I am bored. . . .”

“What sort of things?”

“I should think,” said Desgouttes, “that you would be able to express in your work the meaning you made out of war.”

De Saint-Hemme looked up quickly as though to assure himself Desgouttes was in earnest. Then he said:

“I had hoped to. But I don’t seem to be able to, somehow. For a long time I had tried to hew

out that extraordinary urge that war spelled for me. But what is the use of it?"

"I should like to see your work," Laroche said politely.

"There are some things of mine in the Salon. If you have nothing better to do, you might run down there some time. This might interest you, too."

From his pocket he drew a wallet, extracted a newspaper clipping and passed it to Desgouttes. The latter glanced at it:

"Hm! Loustelotte!"

"He is the greatest critic we have," said De Saint-Hemme defensively, "I might say the *only* art-critic worth a damn."

Desgouttes and Laroche scanned the critique. It was typical of Loustelotte; behind the characters one seemed to hear his insinuating voice; to see the expression of his brittle thought in a play of feminine, soft gesture; to sense all in him that was somewhat special.

Beginning with a fulsome eulogy, it continued:

*"Where De Saint-Hemme proves himself a consummate artist is where he identifies his technique with the freedom and naturalness, the joy and the rapture of his Greek models. These young men of*

*his are, to be sure, modern young men; but they are also modern young men who once and immortally haunted the Leucadian groves.*

*"Here is no selfish and pleasureless sensuality, no conflict and no contact. Here is the triumph of the flesh subjectively, not as a trumpery reflection of another sex, its complement.*

*"He is sheer as a cool flame; here is a true artist. I salute him."*

"Excellent!" said Laroche.

"It's about three of my statues," said De Saint-Hemme, "*American Writer, Toreador and Ganymede.*"

"Aren't you pleased?"

"No. Not really. For this is so slight, after what I had dreamed of. Just a turn of technique, that is all. What else can I do? I am so bored!"

"Why not leave town," suggested Desgouttes, and as he spoke, he looked to Laroche suddenly like Mephistopheles, "I expect your nerves are getting the best of you: a change of air would freshen you."

"I had thought of chucking all this——"

"Why not, then?" repeated Desgouttes.

"I may," said De Saint-Hemmes, rising to go, "I had thought of going down to Biarritz with



young Bondy . . . I don't know . . . Good-bye, you fellows!"

Suddenly he had become languid again and at his ease. He strolled out, casually, a typical Parisian imitating the gait of a Londoner.

"We must see his things," Laroche said.

"If you like."

"I suppose he's quite good, eh?"

"*Un petit maître*," murmured Desgouttes with a smile.

Desgouttes is at his best telling the story of De Saint-Hemme. A slight raising of the eyebrow?—His sentence is endowed with a provocative colon that opens vistas of egregious speculation. A touch at the lobe of his ear, with his crooked index-finger, and a question-mark might as well have been written large across the air. Magician of the imagination, even his falsehoods, rich in the velvets of humor, gain passage before the most incontrovertible truths. So were Casanova and Jean Jacques and the founder of the Mormon religion, and the author of the *Song of Songs*, and Frederick the Great, and all the other great liars of history.

I shall never forget the first time I heard it, sitting on the terrace of a café in the Avenue Wagram with Laroche and Yves Lemaire. It was

a perfect afternoon in spring. During that hopeless interval between the end of luncheon and the arrival of Desgouttes, Yves and I had counted seventeen Fiats, five Rolls, four Amilcars and God knows how many Renaults. I had written a letter to Michigan and one to Minnesota announcing: "*Yves Lemaire is engaged to Mme. Zaratrasi, the celebrated nympho.*" And the day! The flowers of the pushcarts and the eyes of the girls selling them winked up simultaneously with a gay and amorous defiance. Sordid objects achieved a clear and paradoxical irradiation. It was enough to make the solemn street cleaners take off their hats in salute at the backs of passing horses; one could imagine the stoutest of *nounous* aflame with passion.

What a setting for Desgouttes in form! But Yves was refractory.

"I don't agree entirely with you and Laroche," he objected, "because so much of your hypothesis is founded purely on rumor. De Saint-Hemme was never seen, for instance, in the Petite Chaumière, was he? He never appeared at the Bal Mignon as Messalina or Marie-Antoinette? Well, then——"

Desgouttes waved his hand summarily.

"When there is even that amount of gossip

about a fellow," he said didactically, "when, even with lack of corroboration you still cannot get rid of your instinct about him, when no friendship, much less an intrigue, with a woman is credited to him in this day and age, when, in fine, Alfred Loustelotte writes thus of him, one would have to be a writer of fiction to picture him eating his heart out for unrequited love of the daughter of his concierge!"

"Very well," grumbled Yves, "but is it really true there was no woman in his life?"

Desgouttes shook his head:

"Laroche asked him once, point-blank. De Saint-Hemme denied it. He did admit that once he had been on the point of it. 'It was ghastly!' he told Laroche and shuddered with disgust. . . ."

"What about Suzanne Berthelès-Bondy?" asked Yves.

"That," said Desgouttes with dignity, "is what I shall attempt to explain to you if you will kindly cease to interrupt."

During a short pause, Desgouttes ordered us another *fine*. Then he asked me:

"Did you know Suzanne Berthelès-Bondy?"

"No."

"Or her cousin, Richard Bondy?"

"No."

"Richard Bondy was a great friend of De Saint-Hemme. It was with him that De Saint-Hemme went to Biarritz, in accordance with my advice, and found a watery death."

"They had a house out Bidart way," Yves Le-maire informed me, "Suzanne was a slight, thin, rather pretty girl of the modern type. She played tennis a great deal. Her mother——"

"A tall Englishwoman," interrupted Desgouttes, "with an erogenous zone from crown to heel!"

"And," Yves went on, "people whispered that she and Richard, the cousin, had a common father, namely his."

"They resembled each other, certainly."

"Pooh!" scoffed Laroche, "they were first cousins!"

"Until proved to the contrary," said Desgouttes, "I am in favor of the case following the old tradition of children resembling a particular friend of the family. . . ."

"That little Bondy girl was charming," Laroche declared, "she had a perfect figure—not like most modern girls who remind me of men drawn out of the furnace of creation before the dough has set. And she was one of the few girls whom bobbed hair really suited. Charming, she was, charming. . . ."

"Be that as it may," said Desgouttes, with great dignity, determined to spin his yarn without collaboration, "it happened one day that she went out swimming. She was a great lover of sport; I might even say she made a fetich of exercise—merely another masculine preserve, De Saint-Hemme would say, upon which woman has poached. De Saint-Hemme was staying in Bidart with the Bondys, but Suzanne had little to do with him. His entire day was spent in the company of Richard, who was more than a little flattered, for De Saint-Hemme was rather prominent both socially and as an artist.

"Suzanne, as I said, was out swimming, rather late one afternoon. It was a baddish day; there was quite a wind and the usual undertow. Indeed, the sea was so rough that quite a few people were lined up on the beach watching the waves break. Suzanne swam fairly far out, as was her custom. She made a pretty sight, her bobbed head bobbing up and down, moving forward at each of her athletic, wide strokes."

"Did you see it," asked Yves, "or did you make that up? It is a neat touch."

"She kept on swimming blithely away, the people on shore acclaiming the prowess. Suddenly, she appeared to be seized with cramp; she could

move no further. She trod water, I suppose, waving one arm, as best she could, and attempting to halloo for help—a futile proceeding on that sort of day. From various accounts, I gather nobody on the beach knew who it was out there, and not a few believed the swimmer was merely fooling.”

“Individually, of course,” continued Desgouttes, stroking his chin, “my race is the finest in the history of the world. But in the aggregate—my God!

“You can imagine the sort of dialogue pronounced on shore. Surely the person was drowning? Where were the life-guards? What was one to do? And all one saw was a blond head, rising and falling, and an arm shooting up out of the waters after a wave had broken past.

“With ever the excited chattering, the voluble and irresponsible comment of my countrymen:

“‘*Who is it?*’

“‘*Is it a man or a girl?*’

“‘*It is a girl!*’

“‘*No, Monsieur, it is a man!*’

“‘*I affirm to you, sir, that it is a girl!*’

“‘*Not at all, it is an American.*’

“‘*These idiots of Angliches to swim out so far!*’

“‘*He is joking!*’

“‘*But no——*’

*Aristide De Saint Hemme* ■

“ ‘Send for the life-guards! Send for the police!’

“ ‘Get a boat!’

“ ‘I tell you it is the little Bondy!’

“ ‘No, it is a man—I saw him enter the water!’

“ ‘Ah, merde alors!’

“It was at this point that De Saint-Hemme reached the beach in search of Richard Bondy. He observed more carefully than the others. He was an excellent officer, cool and resourceful, and he rose to the emergency. Tossing off his coat, unlacing his boots, he plunged into the surf!

“With a curious pudency—protective? unconscious? who knows?—he did not take off his trousers, even in the water. It is possible, of course, he did not believe there was time.

“A cheer rose from the crowd. Bravo! Brave fellow! Would he get there in time! Assuredly, that unfortunate was drowning. There was no doubt of that now.

“With long, even stroke, with a phlegm that skimmed perfection, De Saint-Hemme made towards the girl, cleaving his way through the waters. He was as steady as though practising for a long-distance swim. At last he reached her. It was in the very nick of time; had he been a few yards distant, at that precise moment, she must surely have sunk for the last time.



"Then they were seen to struggle. She must have been maddened for the moment; she appeared to be dragging him down. And she was strong, that little Bondy girl! Of course, all this is simply what one saw from the beach, the little Bondy never remembered the exact happening."

I interrupted:

"How closely your story comes to melodrama!" I said to Desgouttes, "De Saint-Hemme should have saved the girl and married her!"

"It should have been a glorious *noyade*," Yves exclaimed, "down to the bottom of the sea, the pair of them, locked in each other's arms, with only Death sharp enough to pass between them and a Siren singing them a marine requiem!"

"You are a pair of fools," snapped Desgouttes, "be quiet and listen. There is so much more to tell."

We respected his injunction.

"A bystander," Desgouttes pursued, "later informed the papers that he was sure Suzanne had seized De Saint-Hemme and closed her hands about his neck in a death-grip. In any event, by that time a boat was almost out to where they were. The man says Suzanne dragged De Saint-Hemme down once; then he struck her full in the face, right between the eyes. It was supposed that with

superb sangfroid, he intended to stun her, the more easily thus to effect her rescue. But then, poor devil! he went under himself. I doubt whether he could hear the people yelling to him that the boat was coming; certainly he could not see it as he was being dragged towards the open sea, struggling against Suzanne and the current.

"The men reached Suzanne, unconscious by then. It was the work of an instant to drag her into the boat. Then they made for him, but the swift current swept him out of their reach. When at last they fished him up, trousers and all, the poor fellow was drowned!"

"It was a gallant deed," Laroche pronounced sentence.

"It is almost a pity Suzanne was rescued by the people in the boat," Yves said, "because it does rob De Saint-Hemme of a tuft of glory. They should both have been saved, and she, in marriage, should have made an honest man of him, as Tanaquil suggested. Or else a good *noyade*. There's nothing like a good *noyade* to give a story ginger!"

"Anyhow," said Laroche in a whisper, as though talking to himself, "he was a very brave man and a damned good officer. Saint-Cyr may well be proud of De Saint-Hemme."

"If," I remarked, "your premises about De Saint-Hemme are correct, Desgouttes, then——"

"Of course, they're correct!"

"—then Providence was particularly ironic, I think, singling out this man of the hundreds on the beach, this one man so supremely indifferent to women, to lose his life in giving hers back to one of them."

"Hold on, there——"

"An incurable sentimentalist," I continued, "would read a beautiful redemption in the incident; a cynic would smile naïvely. . . ."

"Wait, cretin!" thundered Desgouttes, "and do not smirch the glorious word of irony on so trumpy a circumstance. Listen to me!"

"Recall the character of De Saint-Hemme. The girl in the café . . . the friendship with Laroche . . . the Saint-Cyr incident . . . our post-war conversation . . . his statues . . . Loustelotte . . . Richard Bondy. . . . Remember that the very afternoon Suzanne was almost drowned, De Saint-Hemme was searching for Richard on the beach. Do not forget the extraordinary likeness between Suzanne and Richard—after all, they were, if not in the world's at any rate in God's sight—what shall I call them?—brother and sister! Then bear in mind simply a head . . . a blond bobbed head

. . . a *boy's* head, by God! popping up and down in the distance. Well, what then——?

"I do not deny his heroism. But I do suggest it was less disinterested, and, at first sight, less ironic than you believe. Carefully he swims out towards the candidate for death by drowning. He remains cool, methodic; his life, more than his life is at stake; he reaches his goal: he seizes the body from between the jaws of death—and then—then—suddenly he discovers it to be not Richard Bondy, his comrade, his friend of friends, someone dearer to himself, but Suzanne! But Suzanne: a girl! Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," I said; "in keeping with your ingenious ideas, he loses his temper and biffs her on the nose!"

"You know, I had thought of that," Desgouttes replied, "but later it appeared somewhat forced, somewhat amateurish to me. In real life, everything is highly professional, expert! In the incident of the alleged aquatic fisticuffs, I see the agitation of an excited Basque onlooker, no more!

"My own private opinion——"

Desgouttes paused magisterially.

"My own private opinion," he said emphatically, "is that De Saint-Hemme merely let go and died! Unconsciously the girl grappled, either to

hold on to him and save herself or even to keep him going. She could easily have seen the boat approaching.

"But he abandoned the struggle. He gave up, chagrin tugging at his heart-strings. Nothing mattered to him then. It was over as soon as, in the upturned face of the girl, he saw the definite and irremediable victory of woman over him. . . ."

Laroche objected:

"It's absurdly far-fetched. Anyhow, he was a damned brave man!"

"What about Suzanne?" I inquired, "what became of her?"

Desgouttes drew his chair in to the table, leaned on an elbow and said out of one side of his mouth:

"She adores his memory, obviously! Her *boudoir* has no less than eighteen photographs of him in twelve different poses. His portrait hangs in the dining-room of their Bidart house. She lives only in the constant contemplation of his heroic gallantry and sacrifice.

"Were posthumous proxy-marriage possible, she would long ago have become Madame Jean-Marie Aristide Robert Armand Merle de Saint-Hemme. It is rumored that once she stayed in a hotel at Verdun (where he served during the war) and

registered under that name. For that I will not vouch.

“But she purchased *American Writer* and *Toreador* and *Ganymede*. Loustelotte is a constant visitor at the Bondys’: I have heard said that he and Suzanne are collaborating on a critical life of De Saint-Hemme. A few strange-looking friends of his turned up and she even lent them money.

“I think Mademoiselle Suzanne Berthelès-Bondy embodies that end which crowns the work! This, my dear Tanaquil, is the cue for the word ‘irony.’ ”

Desgouttes lighted a fresh cigar. There was a very short silence.

“Now, Laroche,” he demanded, “tell us where you were last night?”





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# THE CASE OF ROSALIE DWYER

*"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."*

*Proverbs*

*"We sometimes had those little rubs which Providence sends to enhance the value of its favors."*

*Goldsmith*

*" . . . She that was ever fair  
Fled from her wish and yet said: 'Now I may.' "*

*Shakespeare*

*"Virtue requires a rough and stormy passage, she will have either outward difficulties to wrestle with or inward difficulties."*

*Montaigne*

*"No man can lose what he never had."*

*Izaak Walton*

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THREE OF US, LITWIN, LEMAIRE AND MYSELF were sitting together in the Ritz Bar. I had been to college in America with the former, from 1914 to 1917; my acquaintanceship with the latter dated back over many years to our schoolboy days in Auteuil. My two friends had met in the American Field Service. Subsequently, we often came together; in winter in New York or Philadelphia, in summer in Paris, Biarritz or elsewhere. Our reunion was always attended by appropriate potations.

Lemaire emerged from the Cocktail Room with the announcement that Rosalie Dwyer had just entered with a dark flock of Argentines. We fell to discussing the lady in a general way.

"Men who discuss women are supposed to be cads," said Litwin. "I don't know just why."

Lemaire spoke:

"It seems conventional to discuss them so long as they are not your mistresses. I suppose immunity from discussion is an additional reward for not being virtuous. Or else vice is a thing one takes for granted—because one is civilised rather than because one is noble."

"Isn't it curious," I said, "that a woman can speak as she likes about men? At worst, we say she gossips or sentimentalizes. Take our Rosalie! By the way, let's go in and sit with her."

They decided differently.

"Rosalie Dwyer . . ." mused Litwin, "Rosalie, the perpetual virgin."

"She asked me whether there were any of her camels in the Bar? I told her you two fellows were here and she burst out laughing. I wonder what she meant?"

"Camels? I haven't the faintest idea," answered Litwin, "if she thought I had the hump, she was right. For heaven's sake, order me another Champagne cocktail; this depression is dreadful."

"Rosalie is becoming very French these days," I suggested, "possibly she wished to convey the sense of *chameaux*?"

After the War, Litwin had settled down in Philadelphia, selling bonds for his father. Rosalie was, at the moment, one of the most prominent young girls there. Though quite lovely to look at and extremely amusing, according to rumor, still she was not very popular. I suppose her erratic behavior had something to do with it. She was probably too clever (in a sharp post-flapperish sort of a way), for most of the good people about her; and, growing bored, made few efforts to conceal it. Also she had a great desire for wild adventure, of a kind scarcely to be found in Philadel-

phia. She often got drunk; she had a sharp tongue and no qualms about giving offense; she talked too much, as most people who pass for being "smart"; she was selfish. I did not know her then, but I used to hear about her interminably from Litwin, who was deeply in love with her.

She belonged, of course, to that generation which came after the War. Why, in 1914, we were practically men, and she twelve years old; when we were in France, she was only fifteen! I was still, on my return, governed by bitter discontent at the heart-breaking futility of it all; and, to be quite honest, jealous of the capacity for restless gaiety in my immediate juniors—a gaiety for which they had paid nothing, and for the possession of which we had now to make an effort. It was partly a wistful regret at not being one with these mad folk, at having been cheated out of that period of my life; and partly a fatigued contempt, since I knew I had exhausted, more picturesquely than they could, frivolities of that kind. Their blatancy, I said, was shoddy; their noisy discovery of things I had long ago ceased to wonder at, bored me.

But Litwin adored her. He drove up in a battered Dodge to my office in New York, took me to lunch, borrowed some money and enthused:

"By God, Paul, she's a wonder. Very tall,

golden hair, blue eyes, she drinks like a Marine, and her smutty stories ring the well-known bell every time! You should have seen her swimming in the creek at midnight without a stitch on. Or driving this old bus smack into the orchard-wall. She's read everything: Freud, Beardsley, Pierre Louys—you ought to talk to her about French literature!"

"Do you suppose she would consent to give me lessons?" I asked sarcastically.

"Well, anyhow, she could teach you a few things about raising hell. And she could drink you under the table!"

"Sounds like a charming girl!"

"I'm in love with her, anyhow. If she'll have me, I'll chuck up everything else in the world."

Ingenuously, Litwin poured out his heart to who would listen. But he counted without her, in one respect; it seemed the lady had no intention of marrying anyone at all, thank you very much! She was having too good a time for the nonce.

"Besides," lamented Litwin, "a midnight elopement and no consequences save annulment are more in her line. But she's a perfect wonder, Paul!"

Litwin proposed to her tirelessly; she rejected him every time. He never appeared to notice how

she would use him, nor what a sorry figure he cut; if he did actually, then he must have enjoyed it. Their "affair"—everything in those days was called an "affair," from kissing a personable girl *de passage* to living in sin, as the quaint phrase has it, in Greenwich Village—ended when Rosalie went to Europe. An interesting incident, however, marked its close.

By this time, Litwin was reconciled to the fact that, short of loving at all, she was incapable of loving him in particular. She had allowed him to kiss her, to embrace her; their relation, moreover, possessed an affection, certain on his part, variable on hers, that redeemed it from the ordinary vulgarian association. He was allowed, I gathered, certain familiarities; whether they were in appreciation, I never quite decided. Litwin tried, in his blundering way (he was in love!) to seduce her—and as I write the bald word I realise how ridiculous it sounds when applied to these two. The rebuff had been so cool, so cruelly matter-of-fact that, for a spell, he was convinced she had never felt even kindly towards him. But he loved her, callow or not; and, to put it simply, they spent the night together before she went to Europe.

"Look here, though, Paul," Litwin said, "don't misunderstand me. I swear to God I never touched



her! You must take my word for it: it's gospel, honest!"

From his expression (character and human nature notwithstanding) I was convinced he spoke the truth.

"We arranged," he told me, "to be invited to the Badgers' in Mount Kisco. We occupied rooms giving onto the same balcony; when I went to mine, I asked her to meet me. I undressed, put on my dressing-gown and went out; after I had waited a few instants, she appeared. Lord, but I must have made an ass of myself, Tanaquil! I suppose we stood on that damn balcony, shivering, for a couple of hours! You know how I loved her! And then it was a clear, cool night, with a moon rolling through the sky like a luminous pumpkin. Holy hell!"

This expression epitomised the acme of infidelity to Litwin; invariably it followed a flight into rhetoric.

I like to imagine that evening: to see Litwin pouring out his heart and Rosalie listening. Was she touched? She must have known he was so much decenter than most of her friends. Was she expectant, hostile to his very decency, awaiting an impelling urge from without? Was she playing with him, cat-and-mouse fashion, half-compre-

hending, because thereby the suspense made victory sweeter? Or was she afraid?

They kissed. She did not tremble to his touch, yet as he held her firmly to him and ran one hand over her face in the near-darkness, he believed she was responding to his caress. For once, he thought, she was doing more than simply suffering him to perform an action that brought him pleasure. To the questioning pressure of his lips, she countered with a slight motion of hers, whereas usually she had held her mouth quite firm.

He spoke to her with a divine madness. Something in the absurdity of his suggestion found her less contradictory, and not at all mocking; maybe because she really liked him, and was flattered; maybe because she enjoyed absurdity intrinsically. I can hear the fellow begging her to love him: if not at the moment, then let her try, and in the future she would. I imagine he pleaded with her to think of him whilst she was abroad, knowing all the while in his blind and foolish heart that the first gay youth she spoke to on the steamer would inevitably become her slave.

The air grew chill. She shuddered; he recognised it was for the cold, and nothing in it of desire. They talked on for a while, she falling inexplicably into his mood (or so he thought), yet, all

the time, mentioning other men, off-hand, to make him jealous, even though she compared them unfavorably to him. Presently they went into his room.

She was cold, tired; she sat on his bed; he kissed her, covering her face with quick hot kisses that doubtless she found uncomfortable, though not disconcerting. And she promised him she would stay by him there until morning, at rest in his arms, if he swore on his Bible oath he would not touch her.

*If he swore he would not touch her. . . .*

Amazingly, I think, Litwin swore; more amazingly, he kept his word. Here was one of these monstrous yet veridic happenings that could occur only in these United States. Litwin, adoring her from the very depths of her being; Rosalie of a temperament experimental and venturesome. Litwin, who had been the slave at her bidding, never asking a thing of her; Rosalie, proud of always acquitting herself of obligation. Litwin, a man; Rosalie——

Even if one allows for native sexlessness on either or both sides—or, if you prefer—for chastity and chivalry—whatever their intentions may have been in the beginning, how can one account for these two, heart to heart through the long night,

without their mere flesh, goaded by the intense stimulus of physical proximity, breaking down the barrier between them?

I know Litwin spoke the truth; with a deal of exaggeration, I could almost place myself in his position. But hers? Strange girl. . . . Strange people. . . .

I did not pity Litwin. But—impersonally, to be sure—I rather pitied Rosalie because she exacted such a price from him for her trumpery little triumph.

Thereafter, he wrote to her daily, sometimes even twice a day; it must have bored her. She was staying at Maidenhead, with Laïs Grindley, *chercheuse d'infini*. She replied, once and for ever, telling him men did not interest her at all.

This I do not believe. Litwin did. His attempt at suicide was luckily a failure; but he made a terrible mess of the Badgers' balcony.

The jocosity of Fate had it that Lemaire was to succeed him. This is not, however, particularly curious, since Litwin had often spoken to Rosalie about our friend and had bid the latter visit her. Lemaire, at once discreet and bonhomous, told me the tale without mentioning the girl's name, but, throughout the recital, I was convinced it must be

Rosalie. Certain expressions he quoted, certain manœuvres he mentioned, brought her as clearly to my mind as though he had written her name with his finger across the damp table. The incident took place, I might add, precisely that summer when Litwin, from his camp at Plattsburg, was begging Rosalie to remember him. . . .

Lemaire wandered into the Ritz Bar one morning earlier than his wont. He averred that he had felt faint during business; so he walked over for a drink. His complexion was that of a discolored egg-shell. In two deep purple circles under blurred eyes, the pencil of Nature had traced the single word: *découché*. I challenged him.

"Shall I order Stout and oysters?"

"*Une nuit blanche, mon vieux*. I haven't put in such hours in all my days. Twelve hours of fury—except fortunately it was only six. Really, old boy, I am nonplussed; *je n'en reviens pas!*"

"What is it you do not come back from? Your white night?" I mocked.

But Lemaire was serious.

"Cast your eyes over me, Tanaquil, eh? There. You see me?"

"I do. You present a spectacle neither edifying nor picturesque. But I suffer it, because you asked me to."

“Look at my eye,” he went on, “observe its color. I am the usual sort of a lad, am I not? Look carefully; no trace of insanity, what? Well, *nom de dieu!* I have spent last night in the company of a beautiful girl, yet you find me as chaste as a new-born babe. Oh no, very much chaster, I hasten to add.”

He ordered a drink . . . downed it. . . .

“Do I look like Jeanne d’Arc? Upon my word, it’s enough to make one write a letter of indignation to the *Chicago Tribune!*”

Immediately I knew Rosalie had reappeared. I had thought she was in Ravenna with Laïs Grindley by that time.

“An American, naturally,” I said, “there’s something very *jeune fille Yankee* about that. Tell me the story, Lemaire, there’s a good chap; I shall ask no questions; I shall observe a silence—shall I say: professional?”

“Well, then,” he declared, “call me an amateur, the rankest driveller of a neophyte, a twenty-four cylinder ass. Erect an effigy of me and display it next to that of the estimable Bedrich Zatloukal. Then bury me in a white coffin, for if ever there was purple in my career, this night’s work has faded it beyond violet, beyond a dash of

lavender, to the most candid white. *Saperlipipi!* Write me down an ass."

I made some silly jest about the Creator having taken this duty out of my hands and about the statement of his asininity already adorning the ledgers of the Recording Angel.

"Angel? I was an angel—a record in angels, believe me! My friend, for several months I have been frequenting a young girl, beautiful, amusing, *endiablée*, and, unique among her country-folk, possessing *l'amour de l'inutile*. I became more than keen on her; almost, I fell in love! I was sure that in the end—in some *piquant* and unexpected way, for she delights in paradox—she would yield to me. Do you know I actually proposed marriage!

"A few days ago, she told me she was leaving France; I was to have seen her off. She missed the train, following a two nights' party in Montmartre, and last night, tired, bored, slightly *grise*, she suggested I take her home with me. The first woman ever to beat me to such a suggestion! Oh, she is divine, I tell you! Well, my people are in town, so we went to Desgouttes' flat in the Rue Palatine. I took a bottle of Martel along; we sat in the large room overlooking the garden. It was, as you may remember if you were abroad last



night, a mild and tranquil summer evening. You know that little garden, with the lyric aphrodisiac of the fountain, singing: 'Love each other, children,' it seems to spell out, 'Life is made for Love!' "

"Very pretty, Lemaire!"

"We sipped our *fine*; she became drowsy; presently she removed her dress, her shoes and her stockings. Though that was practically all she wore, it is curious: she now appeared far less indecent. Quietly, without my noticing it, she slipped into bed. I experienced an æsthetic pleasure as I observed her head above the white coverlet, and the form of her body, to which the bed-clothes seemed moulded. She was gay, sparkling; even when she began rouging her lips and making herself up in bed, she was like a child in mischief. Then she uttered two or three little sighs of satisfaction, turned about once or twice, and, smiling, closed her eyes. The light was out, naturally. I followed her example, was about to join her, when she pushed out an arm and said, 'No! Wait a moment!'

"I was surprised: wouldn't you have been? But I strove my best not to look ridiculous—my position was scarcely one of dignity—and I waited. She made me swear on the head of my mother that she would be safe."

Recalling Litwin, I wondered if the change from the Bible to his parent's head denoted anything. Lemaire went on:

"First I was dumbfounded; then I thought she was joking (a perfectly plausible theory), and I assented. When she insisted I be serious, nothing loath, I decided I might as well humor her, for, without being an Adonis or a Don Juan, I considered I could make her beg me to break the idiotic promise she had asked. A feminine whim, I told myself. Well, she would pay for her prudery and for the disadvantage at which I was placed, the little beast! And—well, that is all, Tanaquil."

"But surely——?"

"That is all in actual achievement, I assure you. I will not bother to tell you I begged, I bullied, I sulked, I unraveled ingenuity upon ingenuity; I feigned sleep, sickness, despair; I attempted every known artifice and improvised a few of my own; in brief, I made a silly idiot of myself. The result: nil!"

"But look here, Lemaire——"

"Nil!" he repeated, making an expressive sound and gesture with his thumb-nail against the back of his teeth. "Buy me a drink and consider me utterly beaten!"

Litwin's theories were of the simplest. Having at first taken Rosalie's word literally, to the extent of measures almost fatal to himself and certainly deleterious to the Badgers' balcony, he later decided, in his better moments, that she might have implied what she did, merely to be rid of him conventionally and categorically. After all, even though she did travel with Laïs Grindley, the obvious conclusion was not absolutely foregone. Moreover, the company she kept was all he found to censure; never, in their longish and intimate acquaintance had he surprised any untoward signs that she might serve the same gods as Laïs. And what she said could surely not be held against one so given to ignoring the truth, so artificial, so enamored of paradox. Gradually, as he grew somewhat less bitter, Litwin saw in Rosalie two figures. The first was a girl who, through heredity, environment and inclination, was not capable of physical reaction; the least concession she had made was an enormous effort or else completely lacking in significance. The other figure was that of the emancipated American girl, recognising no barriers in matters of the imagination, of reading and of conversation, yet retaining, from former generations, fear, or what is called high ideals.

Lemaire was more sophisticated. He tested vari-

ous interpretations in his mind, and, without knowing of Litwin's passage-at-arms, he did know Laïs Grindley personally, far better, indeed, than I. Yet somehow, though he quoted Baudelaire and Swinburne by the yard, he was not quite satisfied with that explanation. He stumbled upon another one on the occasion of his yearly visit to church with his grandmother.

Sunday. The rain poured over Paris.

"Won't you take me to the Pro-Cathedral to-day?"

The voice of Litwin's grandmother, conveyed over the wires of the telephone, seemed gently, helplessly, to rebuke the machine that bore it out of the folds of the Rue de Varenne and the early eighties.

"Why, yes, grandmother, I should be delighted."

He had neglected the old lady, what with so many friends in Paris, what with Rosalie. Now she had been gone two weeks. Seeing his grandmother would be like re-entering upon his usual life that she had disrupted. Yes, Rosalie was gone, for even if he saw her again, she would be absent from him in the measure he had most particularly hoped. He knew very well he did not love her; but that did not lessen his longing for her, his sense of defeat.

“You haven’t been to church for so long, dear boy!”

In church, Lemaire observed the American colony sourly. How dull it was, what a ludicrous contradiction! Only one degree better than a Methodist Cathedral in Rome! Claridge’s . . . Fouquet’s Bar . . . the Pro-Cathedral. . . .

Better, he told himself, to think of Rosalie. Where was she now, he wondered? Italy, she had said, but did she ever follow a plan more than a few moments? Rosalie smiling across a cool garden in Florence . . . Rosalie on the beach at the Lido . . . Rosalie powdering her cold nose in the shadow of an ancient town in the hills . . . Rosalie, sleeping. . . .

It was good, he reflected, not to have taken her too seriously, since there was simply nothing at all in common between them, not even the variety of their humor. With an objective mind, he wished he had pursued the affair to its violent end; he would have known definitely, and surely their positions would have been equally ridiculous, and they sensible enough to find laughter therein. That would have been knowledge. Yet when he visualized Rosalie, somehow the thought vanished.

What had she meant by her lazy tenderness, by her brisk gaiety, by her wide-eyed trustfulness?

How freely she used words! What ever could one make of her? What did she mean by calling him her camel?

"Mrs. Borrow-Cobett looks ill, doesn't she?" his grandmother whispered.

"Too much Ciro's . . . Perroquet . . . Champagne. . . ."

"These are strange times," philosophised the old lady, "upon my word, I am glad to live the life I do."

A pause. The service went on.

"The Duchess looks badly too, I think."

"Gallstones," diagnosed Lemaire.

"Dear boy!"

"She ought to go to Karlsbad!"

"Hush, Yves dear, the Bishop is going to preach. He comes from Michigan, I think, or is it Minnesota?"

"A Wolverine Stylite howling over the fleshpots of Lutetia. . . ."

"Pay attention, Yves."

Lemaire saw himself as a little boy, in knickers, with his grandmother, driving him from school in the victoria, bidding him stand straight or pay attention. Only Rosalie had that extraordinary faculty for making him feel younger yet wiser than

she. How? Why? Who could measure Rosalie?

The episcopal voice droned:

"It is easier . . . camel . . . eye of a needle . . . man . . . kingdom of Heaven. . . . My text for to-day . . . needle . . . man . . . heaven. . . ."

When Christopher Columbus first sighted land, he doubtless made an involuntary gesture, betokening that a vast light had broken over him. The past was vindicated; he had taken the trouble to establish his measurements, they were correct; he was one who knew, as they say, his eggs. The present was to him unassailable, the future tumultuous. His effigy in Columbus Circle still shows him somewhat nonplussed.

But Lemaire associating the Bishop's text with Rosalie, saw only a past he had never suspected that was now his possession. A past, furthermore, that annulled present and future. The immensity of the discovery wrung from him a wide gesture of comprehension.

His grandmother said:

"Now, Yves, for Heaven's sake stop fidgeting. . . ."

I met Rosalie at the houses of various friends. Our acquaintance was very slight and casual. She



interested me in the beginning because of her strangely dual appearance. In some way, at times she looked a trifle silly, a tall, overgrown girl with a shock of blond hair that one sees in women's colleges. At others, with her light skin, her clear-cut features, her golden hair and the shining serenity of her blue eyes, she possessed that pure loveliness that has baffled men since the legendary days of Helen of Troy.

Many of her remarks struck me as immature and pointless; they seemed born of hearsay and never coming from experience within her. Later, when it became pleasurable to me merely to observe her and to be with her, my somewhat academic judgment disappeared. And one fine day, I found myself calling upon mutual friends solely in the hope of finding her there.

May suddenly exploded into June. Paris was luminous and intoxicant. I discovered, of a sudden, that Rosalie and I had been constant companions for a fortnight, dining together every night, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, in restaurants or hotels or *bistrots*. Often, too, we challenged Time and sent Night paling into the defeat of Day, as we danced and drank and laughed in a *boite de nuit* or tourist-trap in Montmartre.

On one of these occasions, we spent the earlier

portion of the evening pub-crawling, beginning with the Ritz Bar, continuing up the Champs Élysées, crossing to Montparnasse and ending at Strix's for dinner. At Rosalie's hotel, on the left bank, I deposited her, while she changed her dress; thence we repaired to my place in the Rue Servandoni, that curious street whose white feet touch the Luxembourg gardens and whose black head is bowed before the sombre portal of Saint Sulpice.

Rosalie waited in my diminutive sitting-room whilst I donned my dinner-coat. I left her reclining on the couch; before doing so, I was careful to lock my desk, since I knew she openly confessed to a partiality for perusing people's letters as a pastime. When I emerged, she was turning over the pages of my large edition of the *Roi Pausole*. She lay flat on her stomach, her legs up at right-angles: it needed but a stick of candy and an apple to complete the illusion of childhood.

That night she was in all beauty. Her bobbed hair, frequently dishevelled, was now in perfect order; its rich and aureate sheen set off her pallid, high brow, white as cream, and the cobalt-blue tranquillity of her glance. She was intensely pale; her nether lip protruding, and both lips too thick—a sensuous and selfish mouth, of an angry red, a

danger-signal with the challenging legend of Self-indulgence.

I liked her figure, in especial her long waist that some might have considered too much so. Her legs, excellent in proportion beyond the calf, attenuated too sharply at the knee, but the odd flaw served to enhance their better qualities. She was tall and slight; not one of those doll-like women built, it would seem, to agree with the Pullman Company's notions of space-economy.

We drank a Scotch-and-soda, then returned to a taxi-driver now grown vituperative at our long delay. We made for Montmartre.

In the cab, the jostling over the cobbles brought me very close to her; I could feel the movement of her inhalation and exhalation. When she turned to address me, her very breath fanned my cheek. My arms were against the back of the cab: with the fingers of my right hand I stroked the soft flesh of her neck, at the place where, in former days, a woman's hair was shortest and most downy. Her cheek grazed my own ever so merely; it seemed cooler than I imagined flesh could be. She smelled headily of bath-salts. What was the perfume she used? *Astarté*? *L'Heure Bleue*? *Chair à Chair*? I found a thousand reasons for her using none of these. I must find out somehow. What was it,

too, made her skin so smooth, so smooth to the touch and so cool?

A tenderness for Rosalie swept over me: a wish to be very near to her. It partook at once of the physical and the mental. I longed not only to undergo bodily every reaction that was hers, so that I could taste her laughter on my lips and feel her breath filling my lungs, but also to be at one with her mentally. It was a stupid sort of sentimentalism, as though we were children together and the entire world had no cause for existence save to procure us amusement. Actually, there was no iota of amorous excitement in me. At the moment, I reflected such might perhaps have been her sensation that night with Litwin; but when I considered those circumstances and the present, it occurred to me that elsewhere but in a taxi, I should have enjoyed kissing her, and, even more deeply, her kiss in return. Vehicles were all very well in French novels. . . .

Through the haze of a dream, I saw the lights winking up at us from the river; I heard the drone of other motorcars, the absurdly high-pitched toot of their horns, and, as we crossed the Place de la Concorde, I caught sight of Rosalie's profile, her lips framed for a smile that had not quite reached its destination. I noticed, too, her ten fingers,

curiously bent over her knee; the indentation of her hands reminded me of a huge map of the west coast of Ireland that used to hang in one of the class-rooms at Haileybridge.

I did not speak; words must necessarily have destroyed the perishable charm of the instant. Above all, I told myself I wished not to think. What did anything matter beside the languid pleasure I was savoring? With an effort, I warded off the onslaught of reason, determining to forget about Litwin, drugging myself against the realisation that she was but a modish, callow American snip of a person. Moreover, what did it matter, whether I suspected her of this and of that, justly or unjustly? Now was no time for scrutiny; let me only be blindly tender of her.

At last, Montmartre. The ancient dull round where for once I was not annoyed by the Abbaye, filled with impossible tourists, by young crudity rampant, by the pathos of artificially stimulated middle-age, by the obscenity of the senile. Even the oily obsequiousness of the waiters did not fease me.

Rosalie had to go to the Rat Mort, which I bore blithely; to the Perroquet, where we danced among people who strove bravely to imagine this unlike Broadway and where I heard a high nasal Bryn

Mawrish voice attribute an epigram of Wilde's to Michael Arlen; to the Chien en Chasse, now otherwise named, where I told a bright-eyed Rosalie the strange tale of Artemys Lynne; to Zelli's where my money began to give signs of failing; to the Capitol for breakfast.

In the faint light of dawn, a light still kindly with nothing garish about it, we drove homeward. A gentle rain was falling, the very early rain of Paris that comes to the reveller as a second baptism of joy, that makes the poet lonelier than ever although his rhythms possess him more torrentially. It fell too lightly even for us to close the window, and it shone, mist-like, as we passed the lights on the Place de l'Opéra. A little breeze, cool and welcome as the first third of a cocktail on a tropic afternoon, brought us the bittersweet odor of the Seine.

At the door of Rosalie's hotel, we paused, chatted a few moments:

"Do I have to go home?" she asked.

I looked at her, fearful lest I be hoping too much from her words, fearful, too, lest I must hope for nothing.

"You can't very well stay here," I observed stupidly.

She drew her cloak about her shoulders. It was

like the curtain going down for the last time over a gay comedy. With an attempt to be casual, I hazarded:

“Why not come to my place?”

“Of course,” she assented briskly, “good idea!”

Her tone was so matter-of-fact that I gasped. But, still affected by my own elaborate pretence of unconcern, I did not attempt to account for her reaction. I did not even go so far as to impute its expression to motives like mine. But then, what motives had I?

Rosalie, bright-eyed, her glance clear as a mountain-spring but infinitely more blue, her hair redolent of the coiffeur’s, her manner one of bated excitement as she searched for a fresh subject upon which her fantastic humor might pounce, offered a pleasurable spectacle.

Rosalie, cool, unruffled, watching dispassionately what went on about her or loosing an abrupt, ironic insult and appearing as though she had not opened her mouth, gave one a satisfaction as one beheld her.

Rosalie in the throes of wanton destruction, or wild with gin and devastating as a Bacchante, was equally beautiful.



But none of these possessed such grace as the somewhat tired Rosalie of the moment.

For several seconds, I gazed at her without uttering a word. In the dim candle-light, I could easily do so with impunity, without fear of her annoying "What?" or of the troublous irritation in her query: "What are you thinking?"

She reclined on a tiny couch, leaning against a heap of cushions piled in one corner. Weariness brought out in cruel evidence the weakness that characterised her mouth; several diminutive wrinkles, a certain tautness about the temples, two heavy circles under her eyes revealed the Rosalie of the future, gay, pretty, but with a set hard air of dissipation. Now, however, she was of the past, more surely than ever I had seen her; it was a little fatigued child, still fighting sleep with laughter. Her voice, never gentle or musical, achieved a harsh and metallic sharpness. But weariness out of the blue perfection of her eyes endowed her with such an air of wistfulness that I found my foolish heart going out to her. In vain I told myself it was but my imagination, my sentimentality; at once I recognised that if an illusion can be potent enough, then it is truer than the most tangible of facts.

Rosalie made a motion with her hand as she

raised a cigarette to her lips. I interpreted it that she wished me to come and sit beside her. A wisp of her hair blew against my cheek; I breathed in its fragrance deeply, as though to capture its essence so completely, that I could hold it, among remembered pleasures, against the inevitable loneliness of future days. I was stroking her hand, now, her soft light fingers, three of them a trifle sticky from her last liqueur, two of them browned by tobacco. Her palm was a little dirty. My lips passed over the nape of her neck with a pressure alternately gentle and hard. We kissed, a long and rather placid kiss.

As I returned once more to her lips, a hunger for her came over me; it was as though my mouth, fumbling for hers, were asking a question, probing far into a mystery to find an answer to a riddle. Always I have seen in love nothing save two solitudes, two lonely wants meeting in a lost hour and fashioning out of their tenderness an interlude so sweet that it inspires the courage and the pride to bear the banalities of life. But Rosalie's response was mechanical; she was unaware of what I felt or she willed to be. Then I tasted the peel of the fruit of disenchantment; later I was to bite deep to its bitter core.

Presently she arose, laughed down at me and

went into the adjoining room. I was about to follow, when she motioned me away, and, her finger on her lips, enjoined silence. So I sat on the couch, waiting. Five minutes went by . . . seven . . . ten. . . . My head was heavy. What a lot we had had to drink! Drowsiness assailed me, leaden and unwelcome; I rose, paced the room, finding, in the action, a way to prevent slumber. Then, suddenly, Rosalie's voice:

"Aren't you asleep, Paul?"

"Good Lord, no, Rosalie." I paused a moment: "Are you?"

She laughed, a touch of mischief margining her merriment:

"I shall be, in a moment!"

I moved towards the door. The flickering log in the fireplace shed enough light for me, glancing into my bedroom, to discern Rosalie lying in my bed. Her clothes, what few she wore, lay in a rumpled heap on the floor, just as they had fallen when she stepped out of them. She had drawn the bed-clothes snugly about her neck. I thought her eyes were closed.

"Well?"

"Well?" I repeated.

"Are you going to stand there all night?"

Still silent, I made for the foot of the bed and

sat down. I detected a certain petulance in her voice as she said:

“You look very uncomfortable there.”

There was nothing for me to say. I turned, moved towards her and lay alongside of her, one arm about her shoulders, whilst she enclosed my neck with her arms, our cheeks touching.

“Aren’t you dreadfully uncomfortable?”

“Yes.”

“Why don’t you take off your armor,” she said, referring to my shirt and collar, “it must be scraping your neck.”

It was. I obeyed her injunction. Slipping a dressing-gown over me, I came back to her. The fire flickered feebly and went out. A bell—further away than Saint Sulpice—tollèd four high notes. Then, more deep in tone, another four peals rang. A long moment passed in silence. Rosalie sighed.

“Aren’t you cold?” she whispered.

“I am, rather——”

Then Rosalie attempted to exact from me the extraordinary promise to which Litwin, Lemaire and heaven knows who else had submitted. I refused; she asked why?

“Because I think it is absurd,” I replied, “also I seem at times to have heard of such proceedings.

In any case, I will not be so foolish as to offer satisfaction at my own expense."

But, even as I spoke bitterly, I knew, in my own heart, that nothing could delight me more at the moment than to hold her close against my breast.

*"And the one vulgar final act  
Remain an unadmitted fact,"*

as Arthur Symons' phrase goes. Frankly, I would have been content to feel her head resting against my shoulder and to suffer her drowsed senses to trail off into sleep as I watched her.

*"Blessed are they that spare and that withhold  
Because a whole world will be trusted them,"*

was Lytton's rather more Victorian summing up. I could agree with the doctrine, yet its inspiration must come from myself and not as a result of her demands.

My reply, I felt, irritated her, for she gave a fretful start. Did she suspect, I wondered, that Litwin or Lemaire might have confided in me? Did she see a callousness, a crudity in my refusal? Others might have been, whatever their purpose, so spontaneous in answer. Wasn't she a strange girl?

Once more I grew somnolent. Fatigue leadened my muscle and I glided into a state of semi-consciousness. I felt Rosalie moving; I perceived we were quite close to each other. My determination to exert self-control fell away from me; it was replaced by so ardent a desire for Rosalie that it amounted to pain.

It swept me off my feet; yet the more completely I was swayed by it, the more strictly my thought paralleled it, ever assuring me that here was something profounder than animality. In one moment, I discovered that I had always loved Rosalie, always. How beautiful she was! what gaiety! what spirit! Her laughter alone possessed enough force to raise me from the ennui I had wallowed in so long. What could I not do if Rosalie loved me?

I knew she could set me free; by the conscious gift of herself, in joy and brave defiance, she could somehow give me back to myself, liberating that part of me that was even now torturing itself with her possible refusal. I had been long a prisoner to morbid self-scrutiny; I had dammed up my primary instincts; inhibitions overwhelmed me. Or else I had cheated myself, delivering my body to chance encounters dictated by physical necessity.

ties, my mind to a mercifully unnoticing sleep. Now it was different.

“Rosalie! Rosalie! . . .”

I would make of the word a caress, gentler, far than even my hand moving across her back, gentler than my lips which yet were scarcely touching the proud curve of her neck, gentler than my lashes that swept over her chin as I alternately opened and closed my eyes. I would have her understand that now and always I would be tender of her; I would give as much as she asked, and more; I would be lavish of myself. Could she possibly understand that, while the physical played but a minor part in such an emotion, yet only by her surrender would I be enabled to do for her what I so devoutly desired? Or did she see nothing but another instance of carnality?

“Rosalie . . .”

Speaking her name over and over again brought me, as it were, more closely to her. As I held her fast, till I could feel the pounding of her heart and the throbbing of her blood down her veins, instinctively I saw it was useless. No matter what I did or said: useless!——

Then a rage possessed me, at once because I sensed the hopelessness of it, because she had placed me in a situation so frustrated, and because,



in the remotest recesses of my mind, I told myself I could never be quite certain. Desperately, I kissed her; when, for a moment I insisted, she pleaded I was hurting her. I fell back, disconsolate.

I recalled the suspicion she had sewed in Litwin's heart. I was reminded of scenes she had figured in, which owned little significance in themselves yet were capable in the present circumstances of being construed into valid arguments. Into my unquiet imagination there swam troublous visions of the square shouldered Mrs. Endicott, slapping Rosalie on the back with a virile: "Good night, Dwyer, old thing!"; of Anna Benham, with her arm around Rosalie's waist on a certain night in East Hampton; of Laïs Grindley, awkwardly forceful.

But I reflected how unfounded this was. Did it follow that essentially she inclined towards such pitiful postiche if she had, of necessity, of boredom or of experimentation, occasionally lent herself to a passive rôle? Did not men adore her?

Well, then, she was inanimate, unfeeling as stone. Then why, I wondered, did she seek even the meagre sense of physical proximity that existed at present? Perhaps, within her, lay a desire, unformulated likely, for the savagery of sex-con-

flict with victory to him who dared. That, I knew, I would not do; I respected us both too much and I cared for so much more from her than the merely corporeal. Anyhow, had not Yves failed?

Perhaps, then, she was Litwin's sleeping princess, hoping time after time, to find someone who might irresistibly draw from her the flame that smouldered in a subterranean fastness of her being—one of those princesses we read about in fairy tales, who share apartments with trolls and princes indiscriminately and no injury to their reputations!

We spoke of these things, but little satisfaction did she give me. I accused her of being a "rat of the one-night stands," one of those women I had once written about prophetically, who, though they feel desire, yet are bound by an immense fear, and therefore find release in mock-amour, never risking more than one contact with any man, and prowling, hungry, wary, rodent, through the night.

But, then, what fear possessed Rosalie? No—unfailingly she did as she pleased. Of one thing, I was certain—Rosalie was beyond conscience. Here was no fear.

Instinctively, I dismissed Lemaire's notion. Nature, I felt assured, would not have played so odd a trick upon Rosalie as to differentiate her from her sisters.

Well, then——

Well, then, I do not know. The problem baffled me as the shafts of morning fumbled their way through the heavy drapery of the curtains; it baffled me as the sunlight burst triumphantly into the room, showering gold upon the head of Rosalie, a child in sleep; it baffled me as we sat drinking cocktails in the Ritz, formally as though we had met a day ago; it baffled me as we drove sadly through the melancholy rain to the Gare de Lyon, on the first stage of Rosalie's journey to Italy. Above all, it baffled me and laid a savor of bitterness between my lips when, on the gloomy platform Rosalie smiled luminously and darted a swift kiss upon her camel.

It is appropriate that the journey to Italy should begin at the Gare de Lyon. This station emphasizes so strongly the dark, drab prison of a city, it makes so contrastingly vivid one's sense of escape.

"Dear Paul, it's been too lovely," whispered Rosalie, "I expected a great deal from you and you haven't disappointed me. Where's our porter? Damn it, I can't find my tickets."

I assisted her in both respects, forcing a smile.

"I wish you were coming too, darling, it's really

too absurd to stay cooped up here. Let me hear from you, please. There, hold my coat, will you? My dear, it was——Thanks, I have no change. Where is he going with my hat-box? Dear Paul, I really think I could love you quite a lot, especially if you weren't so serious. Tell me, is my trunk really on the train? Where are my flowers? It was nice of you to get them—I don't want to lose them. Oh, the devil—he's gone past our coach!"

At last I settled Rosalie in her compartment. A quarter of an hour remained before the train left. We walked up and down the platform. At the gate, I noticed a tall American, with much-labeled baggage, making towards the train. I remember reflecting how dull it was that, wherever one might travel in Europe, one must ineluctably meet just such a person. Rosalie smiled. No doubt she read my thoughts.

"You must go, my dear," she said, "I'm quite all right now. I hate to be seen off, you know. I'll be back soon, and I shall look you up, of course! Do write to me; and send me anything you publish. Good-bye, darling—and thanks."

She spoke swiftly, her tone empty of any sentiment whatever. Her embarrassment—for that is

what it amounted to—surprised me and then flattered me. What feelings was she hiding?

I walked to her coach with her, proffered my hand.

“Not like this, Paul.” She looked about her, then, moving impetuously towards me, “Good-bye, darling!” she said.

When I came back to myself, I realised that Rosalie had kissed me, that her radiant smile had fallen sweetly upon me for a moment, and that she was gone. . . .

I walked towards the Metro, thinking of Rosalie. She might have meant so much to me; God knows, I would have meant so much to her. Now, of course, there was simply nothing at all between us—no beginning, no end. She was but an American girl that I had put on the train at the Gare de Lyon bound for Italy.

Stupid of me to let myself go, after Litwin, after Lemaire! Yet I did not regret it! For, though it had entailed suffering at one of the periods in my life when I was most in need of peace, still, I felt I was not to blame. No, I was not to blame.

Would her cruelly ironic shafts strike me when my name came up in a conversation? Would she

ridicule in her mind the incoherent effort I made towards her? Or could there possibly exist a secret tablet, in her heart, on which my name remained, illustrated by at least her pity—oh no! her pity would be horrible!—illustrated by, let us say, a gay *sympathie*?

Rosalie! Rosalie!

Of a sudden, I noticed I had turned about face and was making my way back to the train. There were tears in my eyes, and my arms literally ached. I had no definite plan in mind: I was willing to go to Italy or to prevent Rosalie from going. All I knew was that I must stay with her, whatever happened. Now I had brushed my way past the man at the gate without explanation. I looked at the clock; five minutes to go, five minutes for me to conquer Rosalie!—and to be conquered!

I climbed into the train. I walked along the corridor, my heart beating so hard within me that I could scarcely muster breath. Just as I was about to open the door of Rosalie's compartment, I caught sight of her.

I was not eavesdropping; I have never spied on a human being in my life. But I stood stock still. I was dumbfounded.

Rosalie was bending down over her travelling-bag, ordering certain things. She extracted a nail-

brush, a comb, various articles of toilet. Then a pair of lavender silk pyjamas followed. These she held before her, at arm's length.

"Pretty, eh?" she said, with a laugh.

My eyes followed the direction of her gesture and query. I saw, before her, the tall American, the gentleman with the much-labeled bag whom I had sighted a moment gone. I fled from the station.

I would love other women, after this night I spent with Rosalie. I would, in future, expend tenderness, and I would no doubt possess the adorable quietude that a woman in love lavishes upon her lover. Passionate moments I would undergo, just as everyone else.

But I would never heal from a bruise, a little bruise in a coign of my heart. I suppose to every man there is one woman who, by a combination of circumstances, affects him so that life with her or without her is, in a minor way, insupportable. I do not know. And I am still baffled. . . .







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